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# STEEL

A STORY OF EXCEPTIONS

By Brian Hooker

## I

**A**T the conventional hour of ten in the morning a highly conventional ocean liner was departing for Hamburg, by way of Boulogne-sur-Mer—a wallowing Leviathan of dusky iron swarmed over and about with fluttering fresh color and barbarous with numerous twittering farewells. A heavy young man perspired up the gangway and, gasping, dumped an armful of huge books into the arms of a lighter and younger man, finely inconspicuous, who had observed his tumultuous arrival with derisive languor through wafts of cigarette smoke.

"Gi' me a cigarette," panted the new-comer, slapping five pockets. Then, breathing clouds of relief, "Thought I'd missed you this time, didn't you—you lotus-eating mazourka?"

The other twinkled appreciation. "Oh, no. I only wondered whether you'd be able to make it in a hansom or have to hire an automobile. What are these—your club-checks for last month?"

"Bach. Fugues I have met. The kind-hearted clavichord—I knew you wanted him, but I'd no idea the old sinner was so hefty, until they sent him up. If he's too heavy for any other place, eat him for breakfast tomorrow."

"Much thanks. It's like you, old man. I'm a better sailor than I look, though."

"The thoroughbred theory again—you can't kill a Gordon? Neptune's no snob, though, you'll find. Where's Tony? I'm surprised you let her out of your sight."

Gordon stared into the filthy water overside a moment, unheeding. Then the question seemed to reach him as though from a distance, and he reacted into animation.

"Tony is packed up, sir, and she'll stay packed until I reach Paris. The idea of a violin in the polydorous cabins of a steamer is ipecac to my soul. Besides, I don't know anybody on board; and a strange audience of these"—he waved his cigarette at the chattering decks—"Goths! Country-clubbers! Smile-mongering products of the Age of Isms, turned out in large assortments for the European market! 'Navahoe' for theirs. Phoo!"

His affectation was not irritating because he wore it like a hat—not as a mask or a garment. One saw the quiet hazel eyes beneath, and felt that he would remove it courteously on occasion. His friend followed his gesture, caught a feminine face in the throng, bowed, and said in the tone of a mentor:

"Why, Dickie dear, how unkind! Consider the innocent pleasure and elevation of spirit you might purvey to the mid-ocean musical. Consider the soulful maid thrilled into Prossy's Complaint by your dulcet strains. Consider the plump adulation of middle-aged ladies, the mutterings of masculine jealousy. And you call yourself a musician!"

Gordon had been inattentive again. This time, however, he was gazing not into vacancy but, with a concentration which would have been staring had he not known how to do it, at a tall, sunburnt, amber-haired girl on the hurri-

cane-deck just above them. Presently he turned away, blew a thin smoke-wreath, and said merely: "Who is she?" Friends do not waste explanations.

"Miss Dorne, Audrey Dorne. Isn't she a wonder? I thought she was at York Harbor last Summer."

"Not when I was. Let me see. The others are—hold on, don't tell me—her stodgy fiancé, and, let's see—nobody's mother—her aunt! Miss Dorne's aunt, from Boston, a Unitarian. Anywhere near right?"

"Holmes, you amaze me. She's the tail-end of an old family—too old—so she's doing the best possible thing in marrying that fellow Hudson. He's a Captain of Shoemaking and a golf-shark. I met him in the Metropolitan tournament. He has no soul, no nerves, no grandfather, and the body of a bull-moose. He drove with a rubber-faced iron and beat me four up."

Gordon looked again. "Oh, *that* Hudson? He *is* a rubber-faced iron, himself. Oh, dear! Why can't you and I marry all the girls worth appreciating, and be sure they're not wasted? Let's go to Turkey."

"Dickie, you shock me. Come on up and meet her. Quick, there's the last call."

"I don't want to meet her. I should be jealous. I don't want to meet anybody. Go to the devil. Quit! Let go—cut it, you idiot!"

But he was hustled up the steps, books and all, struggling good-naturedly, and then and there presented to Miss Dorne; to Mr. Hudson, who said: "Pleased to meet you"; and to Miss Folcombe, white-haired and black-browed, who bowed from the waist and said: "Ah, yes—a son of Mr. Kenneth Gordon?"

"Let me make him interesting to you, Miss Dorne," said the Irrepressible. "He didn't want to meet you, and only consented when I told him you were engaged."

Gordon's embarrassment appeared only in a baleful glance. In the midst of the ensuing commonplaces a shout-

ing broke out below. The Irrepressible bit off a sentence, clasped hands with Gordon an instant, while the two men's eyes grew momently beautiful with unspoken fondness, then with a volley of Parthian adieux rushed violently down the moving gangway, leaped a-sprawl on the dock and stood waving, while the steamer ponderously departed. A liner does not move in close quarters. She alters her location.

## II

"You don't look like a musician," observed Miss Dorne. She was lying curled in a steamer-chair, one hand under her brown cheek, lazily reposeful in the sunshine. Richard Gordon's defiance of Neptune had been justified, and she had shared his immunity; but the Bostonian aunt had spent the two days in pale asseverations of perfect well-being, and Mr. Hudson, paying the penalty of robustness, had been invisible outside of Sandy Hook.

Gordon looked up from the careful filling of his pipe.

"I'm always disappointing people," he said plaintively. "They expect a maker of agreeable noises to have the hair and eyes of a cocker spaniel, the complexion of a hog's under side, and the clothes of an Israelite. But they say I write better than I play, which I valorously take as a compliment."

Her eyes appreciated his flippancy which her voice ignored. "But I'm not 'people.' And I don't mean that you ought to look oily; but—" she groped for a word, and took refuge in, "you know what I mean."

"Of course." Gordon held out his left hand, brown as her own, thin, nervous and the least trifle unsteady. A patrician hand, highly educated—the long fingers curiously independent and the cords from wrist to knuckle clearly visible under the skin. "The answer is that all people look exactly what they are—if you look rightly." His eyes fell on Miss Folcombe buried in steamer-rugs and the perusal of "The House of Mirth," and he added: "I read your

aunt at first sight. Maiden lady, Boston, Unitarian, a grove of family trees surrounding an altar to propriety, and a lifetime of pure culture."

The girl gurgled. "Yes—in a hermetically sealed tube like a microbe—but that's mean, and you began it by being impertinent. Now read me."

"Honestly, I'd rather not try."

"I dare you." Then, after a pause, "Why not?"

"I'm afraid of guessing, working in inferences—trickery—fortune-telling—and I want to be honest."

She met his eyes quietly a moment, then looked seaward.

"If you are charlatanesque I shall detect it, and be as forgiving as you deserve. Go on." There was nothing but banter in her tone.

Gordon looked at her as he might have studied a picture. She was perfectly in harmony—the delicate fitness of feature, the amber brightness of her hair against the warm brown of her skin, the indolence of lips and eyes, the almost feline repose in all the long, slow lines of her. And yet the whole personality bore a curious aroma of tension, an indefinite potential of the extreme, the impression that belongs to the greyhound and the hothouse rose, to the thoroughbred horse and the racing yacht—a suggestion of a type inbred, over-refined, forced to a definite perfection at the cost of normality. It evaded and pervaded, implicit in her, everywhere and nowhere. Nothing beyond herself might come of her. She was somehow ultimate; and Nature in the eternity of evolution disregards finalities. After her, the deluge—or perhaps there was not so long to wait.

There was a tension, too, in the introspective silence, and Gordon unreadily began to speak.

"Well, of course, you're a thoroughbred, and you show that. And of course you're artistic appreciatively—you care about all beauties naturally, and you're nervous enough and luxurious enough to be petulant over little every-day discords and might-have-beens. So you separate the dream-world from the world of fact

more widely than they truly are. You dislike fact because you fear it a little. When you want anything you want it violently, immediately—you'd fight for it if you could bring yourself to begin fighting. But the inertia of things paralyzes you, and so you accept your small failures a bit tragically. You think you're practical and rather cynical, but you're not. You tell yourself stories at night, with no actual people in them. You've never had a friend, because understanding implies a dialect, and you're inarticulate—you haven't any words for things. Somebody must have hurt you rather badly a good while ago—a man, perhaps. And you take a pleasure in hiding and hugging Spartan foxes. Lately you've been happier than ever in what you've been taught to call the subordination of your will, which is really the comfort of not needing any will yourself because you can borrow at pleasure."

He stopped, startled. The wind of his speech had overblown discretion. The girl was sitting erect, wide-eyed, looking at him with a kind of horror.

"How do you know?" she almost whispered. "How do you know?"

"I don't know. I meant to stop sooner. I'm awfully sorry—"

She went on without noticing him: "How dared you see so much, or tell me what you saw? Well, I brought it on myself. And now I've got to know and admit that you exist—oh, why couldn't you have stayed away?" Then, wearily, lying back in the big chair, "Of course it's all true—and if you know those things, you understand everything there is of me. Do you understand me?"

He caught at a straw: "Do you remember Stevenson's answer to that question?"

She shook her head.

"God knows, madam; I think it highly improbable."

"That's like a man," she said with sudden scorn, "to break into a friend's house, wanting nothing, and then run away without showing your face, as if you might have been a thief." Both

were silent a moment, the man seeking foothold, the woman expression. Then she looked up quietly. "Are you honest?"

Gordon met her eyes. "I don't know. I mean to be. At least I haven't been playing tricks on you, and I believe all I said. I'm sorry." He smiled, adding: "To be honest as this world goes is to be one man out of a thousand."

She laughed easily. "I'm not an Ophelia, Mr. Gordon."

"You might be proud to be. Ophelia never had a square deal. Hamlet's attitude was like this: 'If you're worth it, I'll love you; but you must be worth it alone, without love. I renounce your unworthiness.' No woman could stand that."

"And so," retorted Miss Dorne, with the full feminine contempt for feminine failure, "she went crazy and drowned herself. I never met a man who didn't defend Ophelia and wail over Desdemona—except John Hudson," she added.

"Shakespeare made a mistake in the conclusion, though," Gordon coolly continued. "Ophelia wasn't really drowned. She recovered her reason and married Fortinbras of Norway."

"Shakespeare?" asked the deep voice of John Hudson. "Good morning. Great day, isn't it?"

"We'd about decided it was too warm for Shakespeare," Gordon answered, rising to shake hands. "And we thought of turning to the musical glasses. How does that strike you?" He looked vaguely about for a steward.

"Good idea," said Hudson, motioning to the man who stood behind him with four tall tumblers on a tray.

### III

THERE was every obvious reason why Richard Gordon should have bridled his mushroom intimacy with John Hudson's fiancée. But he did nothing of the sort. He was one of those to whom the exertion of will in cold blood, anticipating some demand

of the future, is almost unconquerably distasteful. Moreover, his judgment hung in puzzled suspense over the situation. He was not lacking in what is known as experience; and a bachelor in his middle twenties, if he does not admit ignorance of the *Duel of the Sexes*, tends to consider himself omniscient therein. But this relation was a new thing, too electric for ordinary friendship, too frank for flirtation. They disdained or explained laughingly the parlor-magic of romance. In the smiling memory of his boy-loves, Gordon understood perfectly that he was not in love with his acquaintance of days, merely because her sight unsteadied his pulses, because her personality hung about him like a fragrance, even because at times his nerves ached with the sheer sense of her womanhood as they had done for no woman before. But he understood equally that he might have been, or that, given proximity and response, he might yet be. That way lay only impossibility and trouble; for her intended marriage was evidently no mere affair of convenience. Still, if he were laying up for himself any more than evanescent regret, he was free to prefer risk to renunciation, so long as he kept that risk entirely his own. The thought that Audrey might grow uncomfortably to care for him he faced for one moment of sick horror, before kicking it ignominiously into the limbo of subconsciousness. He had not misunderstood or magnified her confession, and he realized that she had said all she meant. And so his meditation turned in a circle whose centre was the one resolution he could form—to be honest from hour to hour, tell the truth in word and deed and silence, and to admit the existence of no bridge which the time had not arrived for crossing.

Meanwhile their companionship was wholly a delight. Comprehension had sprung full-armed from their common intelligence almost at the first. Already they could talk of anything, as friends talk—in broken half-phrases, sure of hitting the mark with the most careless shot. He could start no-

where but she was there almost before him, pointing gleefully toward the next goal. And except for that one break it had all been wholly and wholesomely normal. In the early stages of relation, the woman is warden of the personalities. Miss Dorne locked those gates. But the two multiplied the joy of discovery over imagined common properties; and their mutual dialect soared like a driven golf-ball, rolling to rest upon new levels of understanding only to be swept again skyward. They spent more hours together than Gordon intended or understood.

When a girl wishes to be alone with a man, that event simply transpires. Miss Dorne was actually oftener with him than with Hudson, and the latter's easy, almost cordial, acquiescence in this state of affairs filled Gordon with a puzzled, half-shameful consciousness that he himself would have both felt and acted differently. When he was not hawking after fancies with Audrey, he was generally in the company of one or more of her party. Miss Folcombe gravely liked him for his tactful whimsicality and the old-school courtliness which he assumed in deference to her, as he would have dressed for dinner at her house. Hudson liked him non-committally for his fun, his intelligence, and his frank readiness to defend an opinion. And Gordon, in spite of the growing jealousy that snarled and bristled at the heels of acquaintance, returned the liking with interest of respect.

John Hudson was an iron man of the Iron Age with a fine development of the better ferrous qualities. From no one knew where, equipped no one knew how, he had made himself at thirty-two the already wealthy head of the great business which was his perfect expression; and since the social ladder is now so generally replaced by an express elevator, had won the position as he displayed the specifications of a gentleman. A Harvard man, already cognizant of the facts, might have said that he showed the lack of college; but the discrimination, if true,

was hardly to Hudson's disadvantage. Neither appearance, manner nor speech evidenced that himself instead of his mother had trained him. Success was his one god, and volition was his prophet. He had never found choice difficult nor conquest impossible. Utterly without that mental binocularity which makes Hamlets and heroes, he was immediately able. While others delayed decision or debated ways and means, he turned the search-light of his intelligence upon the instant object and moved thither, unhesitant, unharried. Twenty times a day it was Hudson who did the thing which was to be done. A hot rather than a cold man, his emotion when uncurbed was never unbridled. And now that a woman had set the crown upon his victories, he was admirably himself, master of surrounding circumstance, caparisoned in the panoply of achievement.

"What I like about golf," he said once, "is that it's not a game of chance, nor even a game of skill—it's a game of nerve."

"Of nerves, do you mean?" asked Audrey.

"No—*nerve*. Any duffer has skill enough to make any individual shot in the game. Every day he makes particular holes in figures that would foot up into a record. Well, why doesn't he keep it up all the way round and win out?"

"Because he knows he can't," said Audrey; slowly, as if the words meant many things to her.

"Simply because he loses his nerve. He makes a fluke and gets sore; or he makes a lucky stroke and gets rattled; or, as you say, he thinks he can't. And his nerve cracks. It's no use to just control yourself and not swear out loud—you mustn't *want* to swear—or to hurrah. There mustn't one thing enter your mind except where that ball has got to go next, and how you propose to get it there. Or else, you lose. That's golf."

Said Miss Folcombe: "If I understand rightly, the game demands confidence and tranquillity."

"Not quite that. Take Audrey, for instance. She plays well until she gets into a tournament. Then she gets thinking how much she wants to win, and how pretty the cup is, and when she's driving number five, she's planning a long putt for a four on the eighteenth. Then she flukes, and her nerve goes." He looked at the end of his cigar, and added in the voice of soliloquy: "And, after all, that's the way with everything."

"But the links of life," Gordon suggested airily, "are full of blind drives and unfair lies, beset by cross winds—and there's always some burrowing mole to raise a hump on the green."

Hudson had an odd habit of looking into the last speaker's eyes, instead of into space, while he considered a matter.

He did so now for a moment, then fastened upon the concrete objective: "If there's a blind drive, it's up to you to know the course. There's a club and a stroke for every lie. If the wind's against you, play low and let it spoil the other fellow. I've no stock in hard-luck stories. One fellow's luck balances another's if they play it right. The only excuse is to make good, and then there's no need of excuses." He puffed slowly, short thick clouds. "I've a lot of men under me—all kinds. When I hire a man I put him on his honor. I say, practically: 'You're supposed to be able to do what I want done. Go ahead and produce the goods. If you do, I don't have to know how; if you don't, I don't care why.' Then I let him alone. It works better than watching men and fussing over them."

Audrey crowed with delight. Here was Gordon beaten at his own game of analogy by a man to whom metaphor did not exist.

Miss Folcombe asked: "But is your trust never abused? Have you never been cheated?"

"Sometimes," said Hudson slowly; "every man is. But not twice in the same way."

## IV

BETWEEN betrothal and marriage there comes to every delicately nurtured girl a reaction of panic uncertainty. The visage of the irrevocable daunts her; the glare of new sensation suddenly unveiled blurs her blank innocence and dazzles her artificially nourished understanding. She is haunted by the stagnant suspicion that she may have discovered not the one man of her instinctive affinity, but merely Man in an opportune embodiment. If the Princess had been kissed into awakening by some compatriot or the true Prince arrayed in his uniform! And to lay this specter she may, in her isolation, resort to curious and irregular experiments. With this distemper the man most concerned is naturally powerless to deal. It is a case for the mother or, better still, some safely inoculated contemporary. Wanting these, its manifestations may range from the most ephemeral cloud-shadows, through all the varieties of the Lovers' Quarrel, down to the miserable discovery of a mistake. The entire phenomenon is, of course, undreamt of in the philosophy of communication, and forms part of those unmentioned arcana whereof the anonymous freemasonry of married men assumes a tacit experience.

On the evening of the mid-ocean musical Audrey was effervescent with the uneasy premonition of excitement. Those eagerly officious organizers of amusement who subsist in every community had, of course, pounced insistently upon Gordon, a mild and downy lion cub obvious to the hunter. His flat refusal to play his violin was only thinly padded with some sentences about strings and sea air. But he was good-naturedly willing to play unlimited accompaniments and allowed himself to be featured alone at the piano.

"This kind of thing," he remarked during the day, "gives me a long, slow pain. But I suppose a man had better let himself be made a lapdog of than make a pig of himself."

As she entered the over-decorated room Audrey was more excited than she cared to realize. She anticipated something more than esthetic pleasure from Gordon's playing—just what, she was unwilling to formulate. Needless apprehension of being too early had made the party a trifle late; and the only remaining seats were far to the front. A glance at the programme stirred her with puzzled surmises; for Gordon's choice of music was conventional to the point of irony—a couple of familiar Chopin Nocturnes, Mendelssohn's Spring Song and an arrangement of the Toreador march. She chattered nervously to Hudson, paid a politely punctilious inattention to the music, and wondered dully if the pulse in her throat were visible when Gordon's turn came to play.

The event was a chilling disappointment. He played rhythmically, with a student's unfailing precision of touch, showing an adequate emotional intelligence and a technical skill in reserve over the pieces he had selected—but absolutely nothing more. There was no spiritual salt in it; nothing of the man; nothing of what the self-styled "musical" ignorantly worship under the title of temperament. It was the performance of a Bachelor of Music, faultlessly unsatisfactory, perfectly academic.

"Oh, I wish he'd *play!*" she muttered, as the crowd applauded the Spring Song with tentative enthusiasm.

Miss Folcombe replied: "I think he plays very nicely indeed." And Hudson said heavily: "Why, what's the matter with his playing? I think he's mighty good. No nonsense about him, no matinée mannerism, and he's thoroughly up to his work. I like it."

Perhaps it was impotence to explain which annoyed her so disproportionately.

"Oh, I don't know," petulantly; "there's nothing to it, somehow. I wish—I do wish he'd play his violin."

Hudson looked into her eyes a moment. Then he said quietly: "He shall, if you say so."

"Aunt Elma and I have both tried."

A flavor of dilute defiance italicized her tone.

Hudson nodded and the music began again. When it ended he rose, made his way to the piano, and turning said in his resonantly audible voice:

"Ladies and gentlemen, there is another pleasure in store for us which, I think you will agree, is as welcome as it is unexpected. Mr. Gordon has kindly consented to play for us on his violin."

Amid the swelling crackle of applause Gordon stood, angrily startled, confused, irresolute, looked from Audrey to Hudson, and his eyes narrowed. Then with an assentive gesture he left the room.

"How dared you!" Audrey whispered. "I wish he'd refused."

"He couldn't help himself," said Hudson, utterly without complacency.

"He might have made a scene."

"He might not."

Gordon returned presently with his violin and some sheets of music. He came up to them, bowed, and handed the music, open, to Audrey.

"Will you make amends by playing for me?" he said, looking beyond her.

She glanced down at the score. It was the second movement of Wieniawski's B-flat concerto.

"If you're not afraid of my disgracing you—you can easily find—yes, I will if you wish it."

He had already turned away. She pulled the big diamond from her fourth finger, handed it to Hudson, and followed him to the piano.

"How did you know I played that?" she asked, settling herself on the stool.

"You always produce the goods," he answered, with his quaint smile.

Somehow, the phrase jarred. She twisted her lithe shoulders in a manner which Miss Folcombe noticed with astonishment and grief.

"Now, don't display your accomplishments with the pedal," said the voice above her. He tuned familiarly, his eyes passing over the parti-colored crowd, profuse with inexpressive smiles. Then they fixed on infinity, as he raised his violin.

lin. He marked the time to Audrey with his bow, and began.

What magic dwelt in those few pieces of dry wood, carefully wrought by an old man of Italy two hundred years since? And what spell was come upon this brown boy with the sunburnt hair and the wide hazel eyes, swaying unaffectedly to the rhythm of his gracile bow? The golden wonder of his tone came straight out of the boy's heart of him into the guarded silences where his hearers lived. It was not loud, but the room had not space to contain it. It radiated everywhere, longing, imperious, irresistible, transcending sense. Was it sound or light or language? Audrey followed subconsciously, her eyes and hands involuntary in their work, her whole self teeming with the shower of melody. The sweet of it acted over her in waves. All his youth was in it, his sure gladness, his courage of belief in what the music meant—glamour, and the sharp mystery of dream, the sad vision of utter beauty impossibly beyond all worlds, the freshness of a love unfought for, a laughter tremulous with tears, a light that never was on sea or land.

The lingering cadence curved and closed. The shock of the applause restored her. Gordon was tuning again, the strings close to his ear, his face haggard with the strain of expression. She looked up at him timidly and a ready smile blew away the ashes of the fire in his eyes.

"Now, play me something of your own," she said monotonously.

He looked down at her, doubting. In the tail of his eye he saw Hudson make as if to rise. He tossed his head with a sudden gesture of decision and bowed acquiescence to the imperative crowd. Hudson sat down again.

"If I play my own music," said the voice in the air, "I must do it without accompaniment."

She looked up, wondering if she only imagined the overtone of implication, but he was turned half from her, his bow ready, his eyes puckered as if in the effort of remembering.

The violin is, of course, the most inti-

mate of instruments, and a violin unaccompanied is almost indecorous in the nude privacy of its emotion. As she listened, Audrey felt a sense of shock, almost of shame. The presence of these many people was like a profanity—it seemed monstrous that they should listen to what she heard. Then the spell of the music possessed her, the other presences were not; and she lost the sense of hearing, conscious only of a revelation that she understood.

First came a slow, pure clematis of melody, delicate, archly fair, innocently unfolding, shyly confiding to a close. Then a rhythmic, vigorous second underran it, overbore it, nearly obliterated it, and the duality became a struggle—a struggle with an ache in it. The melody returned alone; but now, by some ineffable softening and widening of the tone, its purity seemed to have taken on yearning—to have suffered unselfishness. Then, with a hurried blare of dissonances, the struggle re-arose, in the minor this time, confused among altered thirds and sixths, all freshness buried in an agony of breathless endeavor, a groping after life and light—and then, out of the weary vortex the melody took wing once more, confident, doubtless of itself, tried and taught and wise. And before it ended, the second came in quietly and the two closed together, leaning upon each other consonantly, each clearly heard, their blending a caress. It might have meant many things—among others, the inner history of a young girl's awakening.

As he finished, and the noise broke out afresh, Gordon carefully laid down his violin. He glanced at Audrey. Then he took his bow in both hands and raised it at arm's length facing the crowd, held it so an instant, then snapped it between his fingers. The applause stopped short. People looked at one another. And Gordon, his violin under his arm, went quickly out of the room.

He laid the instrument away, and hurried into the windy darkness of the deck, his heart clamorous in his ears, his mind tossing. He had done it now.

He no more doubted the comprehension of his message than if he had written it on paper, and what was to come next? As he turned a corner a presence met him out of the darkness—a swift shadow, a fragrance, and two wonderful wet eyes.

"When did you write that?" she asked. Her voice seemed to come from far off.

"Yesterday. You knew. Did you understand?"

In the gloom her face was dimly visible—an expression without definite features, strangely white and drawn.

"I knew you wrote it to me. And I understood. But you must word things." A pause. Then, "Why did you break your bow?"

"I'm not quite sure. Some way or other, it was the thing to do."

Her breath quickened. "Because you had been forced to play?"

"Partly that. And partly—well, you drink some healths in broken glass—and I couldn't break poor old Tony—so—"

She laid a hand on each of his shoulders, looking him full in the eyes until he felt a dizziness. Then she leaned to him slowly, and kissed him lightly on the lips.

Then she was in his arms, a wild thing palsied with the madness of abandonment, sobbing with surrender. And Gordon, sick and shaken with her, was murmuring immemorable sayings known from all time of men and women, that need not be written down again.

Suddenly she struggled away and covered her face with her hands.

"It's all wrong," she moaned, "all wrong and bad and hopeless and impossible. Oh, why couldn't we have kept away from each other? Why must this thing happen to us?" She caught his shoulders again. "Say that you love me," she said hoarsely.

"I love you," Gordon repeated steadily, "and I take on myself all that that means; all that it needs, because I know."

"God bless you, dear," she whispered, lips, hands and eyes his own. Then

she pushed him violently away, crying, "Oh, it's all wrong—all wrong!" and turned and ran—through the shadows.

Gordon turned his face upward. It was beginning to rain.

## V

"THE Morning After" is rapidly becoming a legitimate phrase in the language of intemperate American people; and since the law of action and reaction, among many others, obtains alike in Physics and in Metaphysics, the significance of phrase has far outspread any reference to mere bodily intoxication. It belongs equally to that dry numbness which is the price of a glorious hour, however natural and holy, and which too often irks eager youth with a fear that the wine of the spirit must be an evil thing because we pale after the sweet flush of it. In the low light of every day visions just past suffer nonentity, as a fire is put out by the sun. Common sense usurps, and sensibility turns acid. It was just after the glory of Gethsemane that Peter very humanly denied his God. John must have had the same experience; but he knew himself and waited without foolish words until it passed. Among women, perhaps because of their physical innocences, the understanding of this trouble is dangerously less general than among men.

Wherefore, in the casual gathering of the party after breakfast, both Richard and Audrey gave each other undeserved credit for an astonishing power of unconsciousness. There was not the faintest adumbration of any mutuality in the atmosphere. The night before simply had never been. And these two, looking out through the rain-flecked glass over a gray despondency of sea and sky, had absolutely no more reserve beneath their tranquil contributions to the community of mild boredom than had Miss Folcombe and John Hudson.

Miss Folcombe resurrected from a magazine to remark: "These articles would interest you, John—by the

presidents of the various universities on 'College Men in Business.'

"I'll look at that one when you're finished. There'd be more in it for me, though, if there were more business men in colleges."

"I've meant to ask you, sometime," Gordon put in, "what you think of the contention that a college training gives a man acquaintances, and advantages in using his head, that compensate, when he finally gets to work, for the four years' time."

"There's nothing in it," replied Hudson promptly. "I've never seen a college graduate show any compensation for his scattering of energy and his inexperience of things that are a-b-c to the office-boy. It'll be college or business for my son when he gets old enough to choose—the combination isn't good economy."

"You're prejudiced," said Audrey, looking out at the rain.

"Naturally, but my prejudices never dictate in a practical judgment. I rather tend to overrate college in general, like most men who haven't had it. But this is a matter of fact. For the professional man it all pays in the long run—friendships, mental training, education by the surroundings—it all counts in. But if a fellow's going into business, college won't be worth while. It isn't reasonable that it should. He forms a lot of footless habits, and develops tastes that he can't afford time or money for, and learns a lot of things from books and book-men that won't be any use to him. And then he has the handicap of four good years and more or less nonsense to unlearn. Why, the average college man thinks it's of no importance when he pays his bills."

"He gets over that pretty quickly, though," said Gordon. "I don't believe there's any dishonesty about it—and the result teaches him sense."

"That's just it—he regards honesty as a virtue, instead of a matter like washing his hands. He has no conception that a hundred dollars today isn't a hundred dollars a year from now. That's just the trouble—he makes it

all ethical and personal, and it's discourteous to send him a bill. No, the whole theory is university advertising—there's nothing in it."

"That's reasonable, but I think it's extreme. You don't really think that college is all duns and cigarettes. It isn't the college man who defaults for half a million after ten irreproachable years—it's your bred-in-the-bone ex-office-boy with strictly business ideals and a hunch on the market. And then, a thoroughbred is better stuff to handle, all through—he may need more licking into shape, but you know you're not wasting labor on shoddy material."

Said Miss Folcombe: "Isn't that, after all, the real point, John? Education aside, the collegian is more likely to be a man of family; and blood will tell, you know, in anything."

"Not a bit of it," Audrey spoke with sudden emphasis. "John is right. Success is what counts. All that talk about family as a sort of talisman is a fiction. I don't believe in triumphant failure and spiritual victory and all that. Breeding only makes a man more sensitive, more self-conscious—more open to attack—he knows when he's hurt, and he thinks about himself, and he plays by rule. He fights till he's beaten just like any man, and he's more apt to be beaten for making ballades while he fences. Cyrano makes me sick—if he'd been a man instead of a coat-of-arms he'd have had Roxane for himself. And then, when your gentle, very perfect knight is licked, he watches the enemy out of sight and then crows, 'I am the captain of my soul,' like a chicken. He's handicapped by knowing that he has a soul. The thing I hate most on earth is that I'm a Dorne and can't help it."

Miss Folcombe's deity was blasphemed. She fairly held up her hands. "Why, Audrey!" Speech was inadequate.

"You're all wrong." Dick mounted his pet hobby. "That's sheer cheap Jack-Londonism. It simply isn't so. Other things being anywhere near equal, good blood wins out every time. Your thoroughbred may suffer more,

he may hate to fight, he may be sick afraid all through it, even—but *he won't give in*. The other fellow likes fighting, he doesn't feel punishment, he'll win out the little fights that neither cares much about. But when he gets to the point where he does feel hurt and knows he's past hope—then he lies down. The yellow streak may be deep in, but if you get down to it, it's all over. Now, the gentleman has been in despair for half the fight, but he hangs on in spite of it. He's stronger than himself." He turned to Audrey. "You never saw a cock-fight, of course. Well, the real game chicken doesn't crow when he's licked, because he isn't licked until he's dead. That modern theory of yours sounds brutally grand, Miss Dorne, but all fact and history are against it. It's just a decadent bull-worship, and it's false."

Miss Folcombe almost applauded. Hudson had been looking at the speakers in turn. He came in deliberately:

"No, you're half right, Gordon, but you aren't logical. Granted about horses and roosters—but there's no analogy between breeding in animals and family in human beings. 'Family' only means a breeding selection not for any practical qualities, but for sensibility and social graces—and of course those are the only sure results. A man bred like a race-horse might turn out as well; but there's no such thing except by accident, don't you see? And anyway, human heredity is a subject we don't know much about. No, your analogy doesn't hold water. History's against you, too. Look at the world's aristocracies and their inevitable losing fight against the barbarian."

"And look at Thermopylae, and Alfred, and Robert Browning, and Stevenson, and Washington," Gordon retorted. "We're splitting on a definition of breeding, that's all. Of course, there are imitations, but 'family' means at its best more than man-millinery, and you know it. We've really agreed on the meaning of the word. You know about the business side of it, and I don't doubt your opinion of the

college product—but you take the Yale or Harvard man, the real thing, with his traditions, and put him in a really tight place in business or anywhere else. Gold's a bit soft for commercial purposes, but try an acid on it—haven't you found that so?"

"No," said Hudson slowly, "I haven't met with that situation. You see, it's this way." He thought a moment, his eyes steadily on Gordon's. "Every man has his limit. Granting everything you say, the thoroughbred's limit is his life; the ordinary man's is his hope. Well, now, in nine cases out of ten your thoroughbred will reach his limit first, that's all. He'll be dead before the other man begins to despair, because the chances are against his being the stronger. Take you and me, for instance. If we got up against each other, you might take a lot of beating—you might never give up. I don't know just where my despairing point is located. But I'd be likely to win out because I shouldn't waste time or thought on anything but landing the next blow and getting my weight behind it. Whereas you'd be thinking it all over all alone. Take last night, for instance."

"Yes," Gordon repeated, "take last night, for instance," adding, with a laugh, "well, your *argumentum ad hominem* closes the discussion, unless we refer to wager of battle, which heaven forfend! I believe I'm right, still, but I can see that there's a lot in your point of view."

"That's the trouble with you," Audrey broke in wearily. "You're always looking at the other man's point of view." The resentment in her voice was uncalled for.

A few minutes later the exodus for lunch left them alone a moment, and Audrey caught up the lapsed reality as if the last twelve hours had been a momentary interruption.

"Listen, Richard. You mustn't do anything. I'm right about this. It's no use. We must just—forget."

"And then? You're talking nonsense, you know."

"What are you going to do?"

"Tell John Hudson the truth. After that—we'll see."

"What's the use? You don't know him. No, you don't. He'll just brush you aside—oh, you mustn't *try* to fight. Don't make it worse for me than it is. It isn't real—drop it; drop it now." There was only a dry boredom in her voice.

"It's going to be real—and you are going to do the hardest thing of all—sit still and do nothing."

"You think I don't know, Richard—oh, I don't know how I feel—can't you hold me? Why don't you *make* me do something? I—" He stopped her.

"Don't tell me that now. Tell me you trust me. It's all right."

"I do trust you." She was somehow nearer without having moved. There was no mistaking the reckless demand in her eyes.

Life strained like a tuned string. On the glass one raindrop grew too heavy and zigzagged down across the gray pane. Gordon began mechanically hunting for his handkerchief, as he said lightly:

"There's a certain amount of daylight here."

"Oh—you, you! That's just you all over!" Then, with burlesque conventionality, "Really, Mr. Gordon, we shall be late for our lunch, you know." She swung her skirts and swept away. Gordon followed, laughingly. He found his handkerchief in time to hide the blood that was running from his underlip.

## VI

"Oh, Hudson, I've something to talk over with you, if that log will continue to work a while without your supervision."

Hudson turned from the taffrail, wet, red and genial. "Hullo. Where have you kept yourself all afternoon? Sure, fire away, if you can make me hear in this wind."

"I can't. Let's go down in the smoker. If we want wetness we can take it internally."

Hudson followed without comment. Gordon went straight to a little corner table, out of immediate earshot of the narcotic groups, settled into the leathered seat, and pressed a button.

"Cigar?" Hudson offered his case.

"Thanks, I've a cigarette going." Gordon deliberately manipulated the siphon. "Say when—that right?" He half filled his own glass, tasted it, and blew a deep breath of thin smoke. "Well, here's looking."

"Happy days," Hudson touched glasses carelessly, and leaned back to cut his cigar. "What's the row?"

Richard leaned forward suddenly. "Hold on a second—say that cigar-band—thanks. My kid brother collects them."

To the uninitiated, the golfer's waggle before the drive appears like ostentation of skill. Gordon put the cigar-band elaborately away, flipped off his ashes and inhaled again. When he spoke his tone was carefully low, level and distinct.

"I've been wanting to speak to you about Miss Dorne."

"We won't discuss Miss Dorne." Hudson's careless finality absolutely annihilated the topic. Gordon evenly went on:

"It's a very simple point. I think you have no right to marry her. And so, naturally, you are not going to marry her—for the reason that, in spite of the great qualities which I should be impudent, under the circumstances, to dilate upon, you are not the right man for her. It isn't to be. Is that clear?"

For the first time in his life Hudson was surprised off his guard. He did not know how to meet a man who actualized the inconceivable. He showed no sign, looked steadily into his antagonist's wide eyes, and waited, thinking hard. Gordon finished his drink and resumed:

"It's really beside the question, but of course my reason for knowing this, and for speaking to you of it, is that I am the one right man in the world, myself. I've told her so, of course." He smoked. "The situation is un-

fortunate, just now, for us all; but I thought best that we should all three possess the facts in the case right away. That's all."

Hudson had found the immediate thing to be done.

"I see," he said calmly. "Now, what do you want me to do about it?"

It was the feint of a master-fighter and it did its work. Gordon had expected rage, and had calculated time and place accordingly; he had prepared for a contemptuous putting aside, for an immediate triangular scene, for the allegation of insanity. But the exterior of acquiescence uncovered the one joint in his armor. He hesitated, stammered. The iron man relentlessly drove home his blow.

"You see, you don't know what you want. You have only a boyish notion of stirring up some sort of a disturbance to correspond with your own feelings. You make the same mistake as most artistic people, of thinking that every man who hasn't your particular kind of nerves and your emotional view of things is a sort of brute. I understand all about this. You meet an attractive girl, and you talk to her, and play to her, and in three days you convince yourself that you've met your affinity—which is all bosh. Then you tell the girl and, she being recently engaged and very nervous, you make her think you understand her as no one else does—I know all about that old trick—and then you both go into heroics, and you come to me. Well, it's unfortunate, but it's nothing very unusual. I'm sorry for you because you're sincere; but you'll find that nothing very much will happen."

"Excuse me," Gordon put in, "aren't you ready for another drink?"

Hudson grinned. He was a very good poker-player. "Thanks, it's my turn," he said, ringing the bell. They smoked in silence until the drinks came; then he continued:

"Now you just sit tight and let things take their normal course. Cool off. You've made some trouble and the manly thing for you to do is just to forget it and be around with us in a

rational way just as if nothing had happened. If you think there's anything in your idea, wait and see. Only," the iron rang in his tone, "no heroics—no soulful talks. You won't be allowed to make any more disturbance."

"I'm glad you look at it that way," Gordon remarked. "There'll be as little trouble as I can manage. What there is will be of your making, because Miss Dorne is going to marry me."

Hudson leaned across the little table, his broad jaw set like a vise.

"Don't make a nuisance of yourself—you understand?—or you'll find yourself where you'll be harmless for a while."

Gordon shook his head. "That won't work, you'll find."

"Won't it?" grimly.

"No, because you can't work it alone," retorted Gordon impatiently. "Man, can't you understand?"

Hudson thought a moment, looking into his eyes. "If I catch you overstepping the proprieties," he stated deliberately, "I'll thrash you within one inch of your life."

A curious chill ran over Gordon. Then a flush. Then another chill, lingering in the roots of his hair. His eyes narrowed.

"Yes," he answered meditatively, "you could do that, of course. What then?"

There was no answer. The scale trembled and turned. In the little globe of silence that seemed to shut them in from the tinkling, noisy room, Gordon found himself. When he spoke again he had no doubts.

"This isn't a trial of strength—you're stronger than I am. It isn't a matter between you and me. It's a question of fact. If your understanding of this thing were true, I couldn't do anything. As it is, you can't do anything. You make the mistake of your kind in denying the existence of whatever is beyond your seeing. You might shoot me, but you won't; you might lock me up, but you can't. What you do doesn't matter. You can't beat me, because you can't beat us; you can't beat me, because you're

in this for yourself, and I'm in it for something beyond myself; you can't beat me because I'm weaker than you and I'm afraid of you, and neither makes any difference to me. I win, because I have the right, and I know. And I'm a Gordon, and *I won't stop.*"

Hudson leaned back in his chair, wondering at the new thing before him—the luminous face of a man transfigured. The world-old glint of battle smiled in his eyes.

"You're a man, Gordon," he growled, "if you are a god-damn-fool."

"Thanks. For the rest, as you said, we'll see." The glamour faded, and Gordon's artistic sense came back with the remembering of his untasted glass.

"Here's my best regards." The glasses touched.

"Your good health, sir," said Hudson.

## VII

THE resilient endurance of the human organism is perhaps the greatest wonder in a wonderful world. But any knowledge of its extent is both costly and painful to acquire. And through the numb diurnity of the next two days Gordon learned that, although a man may drive himself by inherent will beyond his normal power and courage, yet he pays the price. Need borrows at usury. And the agony of sheer physical strain was to Gordon's occasional contemplation an uncanny surprise. He was not conscious of any commensurate exertion.

For the situation was externally calm, and altogether inactive. Hudson was economical of scenes. He simply saw to it that Audrey and Gordon had no opportunity to solidify their nebulous relation. They were alone now and then, but momentarily, and at what he would have called "rational" times and places. So that the two were forced to bear their mutuality like a guiltiness. It was forbidden the honest light just when it most needed a foothold in the commonplace. There was nothing to be done,

no occasion to justify the overt melodrama of an arranged meeting. They were together most of the time without speech of what was clamorous within them; and under this mockery of intercourse the uneasy tension grew and irritated, oppressive as the sultry hush before a thunderstorm. With no palpable change the whole party were uncomfortable together—except Hudson, who, insensible to electricity, was warmly pleased to see his Fabian policy baffling the enemy. Miss Folcombe spoke to him uncomprehendingly of Gordon's nervous looks and silences.

"Nonsense, Aunt Elma," he reassured her, "it's your imagination. Why, you don't even know just what you imagine, do you?"

Miss Folcombe floundered amid indefinites.

"Well, I guess there's nothing to worry over. And we'll be at Boulogne Friday. Don't put ideas in Audrey's head anyway."

Of course Miss Folcombe felt solely responsible and turned against Gordon all the intangible terror of the aroused chaperon. Gordon was politely made to feel unwelcome—so politely that he distrusted the feeling as perhaps only his own hypersensitiveness, and forced himself to disregard it. He drove himself to the light aimless talk, the little ready courtesies, the frank steamer-intimacy which had all been so natural before; and he did it with a prickly consciousness of acting a part, with a restless urge toward activity where no act presented itself as advisable, with a weary sense of drifting before petty circumstance. His conversation with Hudson constantly took the form of small arguments, trifling contests of wisdom or of will, in which he seemed impalpably on trial before Audrey, and in which he nearly always got the worst of the encounter. The subjects somehow fell where he was at a disadvantage. If he refused battle Audrey would drive him into it with a question or appeal. And Hudson was so courteous, so forbearing in his little victories, and so flawless in his unconsciousness that Gordon could not for

the life of him determine whether the lists were opened by his antagonist or by a nagging fate.

It was all so petty, in any aspect, that he was ashamed of minding it; but it was as deadly a sapping of his self-confidence as could readily have been devised. The heroic humor long leashed with no more worthy quarry than a cloud of flies, runs mad and rends its master. Gordon unreasonably despised himself for doing nothing, when in fact nothing was to do. He was racing his engine.

He could not at all understand Audrey. This was natural. Solomon speaks wonderingly of the way of a man with a maid; it is tame and simple to the way of a maid with a man, which she herself walks blindly, dazed with light. But Gordon was used to understand people, and when the palimpsest of suggestion grew illegible he must needs go on reading, miserably bewildered among alternative interpretations.

Her silence worried him. She made no appeal, asked no counsel, never in their moments of privacy made any mention of what had passed between them. She might have agreed with Hudson to obviate romance. She sprinkled small-talk over the thresh-old of sincerity. And yet she never seemed unconscious. There was a tension under it all. She seemed to be always watching how he comported himself, weighing him in the balance; as if she had removed herself to a great distance from the struggle whence she wisely smiled at him out of a tolerant, kindly omniscience touched with a tinge of disappointment; as if she were contemplating some prettily youthful romance, being herself a very old person.

The sense that she was sitting in judgment over him rasped Gordon's nerves; and her detachment seemed bitterly unfair. If she would only stand by his side frankly defying opposition, the whole affair would become so inflexibly simple. What could stand in their way?

In his weakest hour Gordon asked

a direct question. They were watching a school of porpoises overside.

"You knew that we had a talk day before yesterday?" he said.

She looked at him. "About what? Who?"

Gordon hated to phrase the obvious. "The governors of North and South Carolina."

"I don't know what you mean."

Gordon could not possibly have answered without irritation.

"I knew that you explained yourself to John about me," she said after awhile, patiently.

"Did he and you talk it over?"

The pulse began visibly to beat in her brown throat.

"No," she answered, "he hasn't alluded to it at all." Then she added drily, "Not even to ask me if I knew of it."

Gordon shrank and grew white. She watched him struggle for some words, looking quietly on him with a little droop at the corners of her mouth. What she felt was only a warm mother-yearning to take him into her arms, calmly, without any passion, and kiss his hurt eyes and rest him and make him drowsy-happy like a child comforted. But it was eleven in the morning on a crowded deck. Gordon read her look as kindly contempt, and she knew that, and somehow intended it. She turned seaward to say: "How can you be so serious on such a morning? Consider the fishes of the sea, how they swim."

If Gordon had read her eyes aright, he would have understood that in that moment it became possible for her to love him. But the man could not see, and the girl did not know.

That afternoon a gray film swept over sky and sea, and a heavy swell swung out of the deceiving northeast. Gordon spent the time alone, tramping nervously about the ship, alternately pondering impractical imaginations and trying aimlessly to get away from himself and rest. He was irritably unfit for company, and he didn't see why the devil he should feel so tired and shaky. It did not occur to him as im-

portant that, although he had not actually missed food and sleep, yet for some days he had eaten tastelessly and slept like one in a fever; that he had forsaken his pipe, whereas the cigarette is a treacherous refuge in time of trouble; and that spiritual power frustrated reacts with cynical materialism upon the human liver. Moreover, the scale of his experiences had become unmeaning to him, like the notation of great numbers. He had no measure of events, and was surprised at the bodily evidence of stress.

Toward evening a chill rage of wind brought the rain, and the steamer swallowed sidelong through desolation. The sunlit blue of a few hours before seemed as fictitious as the remembrance of June in February. Gordon visited the engine-room, tried his collegiate German and French on the steerage, and bored the mate with reminiscences of Clark Russell. He tried to write; but the harmonies refused to color, and each part seemed instinct with a perverse cantankerous individuality. So he returned to the wet deck with a certain relief in facing the active malice of the weather. Dinner was a rattling dreariness of empty seats. Soon afterward Miss Folcombe and Audrey disappeared; and Gordon, after an hour of expensively bad poker with Hudson and a couple of gentlemanly nonentities, crawled into his berth with a dizzy headache.

To his unease of mind and body, sleep was absurd.

He lay with closed eyes, listening to the irksome sea-noises, mechanically conscious of the motion of the vessel, of the steady whir and jar of the machinery, his thought pacing and turning and exploring its limitations like a caged beast. Every detail of the days rose before him in irregular review, now sharply sweet, now hotly shameful with distrust. He should have refused to play. It had been childish to break his bow—but what a gesture! He had only borrowed complexity by telling Hudson. He had

been fearless in what he saw to do. He had made no slip nor failure. Where had he failed? Here, a wiser man would have restrained himself; there he had been trivially prudent before opportunity. He was a theatrical young fool; he was an old man in worldly wisdom—“*si la vieillesse pouvait!*” Ah, but if they both cared, nothing could really matter—let God look after the means. What was the next need? He planned feverishly, only to decide that he was wise in waiting until Audrey should be sure of herself. And it was all so much harder for her! The sureness and the blindness of struggle, and the tangle of honor! The beauty and the joy of her came upon him with a freshness that ached behind his eyes—the thousand little sweet ways of her, her daintily sure responses, her utter girlishness, her look or tone in saying this or that, the blessed faults that made her humanly real and dear. Then the thought of Hudson brought the horror of physical jealousy. She was all that a man might seek in her—and if it should all prove to be for *him!* Relentless imagination pictured Hudson holding fast her hands, her eyes on his with that same look in them, her lips—that way lay madness; he shut out the vision of that lie.

And now the arch-doubt re-arose, creeping about the crannies of his soul, and would not be disregarded. In cold soberness of reason, was he certain of himself? Could it be that this wonder-growth of days was actual, able to endure time and commonplace, a thing to live by always that could not falter nor change? Was he not deceiving himself into an artistic ecstasy? Where was a sign by which he might know reality—what was love, after all? Gordon heard the specter out to the last word, and defied it face to face. “All right,” he said aloud. “Suppose I am mistaken and don’t care in the right way. Suppose there’s no such thing. Let it be all a lie—by God, I’ll go on acting clear through as if it were utterly truth!” Then he had rest from himself and fell into a sleep.

He awoke suddenly looking into

Audrey's eyes. Her face hung before him vignetted in the darkness, looking at him with that drawn longing he had seen once before. It was like that after-presence of a dream which sometimes reaches past awakening. He sat up and shook himself thoroughly awake.

She was still there, motionless, somehow with no impression of locality, visible midway before him. He shut his eyes. That made no difference, and his hair crисped a little. He tried to go to sleep, but the urge of that mysterious look was not to be borne. Was he remembering it or did he actually seem to see her face?

"Oh, hell," he muttered, "this won't do. If I'm going to have 'em this way I'd better get some fresh air." He looked at his watch, surprised to find that it was not yet eleven, dressed, putting on a heavy sweater and a raincoat, and went on deck, misnaming himself for a whole asylum of fools.

The ship was lurching through a black wrath of wind and water, her lights nebulous in the mingled rain and spray, a wet roar driving along her slippery decks. Gordon worked his way forward close to the rail, keeping his feet with difficulty and half-choked by the salt gusts. Under the lee of a boat he made vain attempts to light his pipe. The matches flared and went out and he waxed profane.

A darker shadow moved in the darkness at the other end of the boat, and a guarded laugh broke out.

"Richard, you're in the presence of a lady."

"Audrey! For heaven's sake, child, what are you out here alone for?"

"Don't make such a noise, boy. Come here, and I'll give you some wet skirt to sit on."

He groped across to her. "You mustn't stay out here, dear child. It's too insane—and besides, you'll get your death. Come."

"Richard, please don't make me go in. It'll be worse for me than staying." She caught at his hands. "Please—won't you believe me?" The dry

tension of her voice meant something more than freakishness.

"What is it?"

"Come here." She drew him down beside her, keeping his left hand in both her own, and pressing her cheek against his arm. It was as if she could not get close enough to him. She was shivering, and he threw his cape around her.

"I'm not cold." She had a heavy one shawl-wise about her head and shoulders, and her hands were dry and warm. "Richard, I—I couldn't sleep—and I needed you. I just had to be out in the air, somehow. It wasn't silly."

"How long——?"

"Only a moment. I . . . tried to make you know."

He had no need to answer in words. Audrey raised her head and stared at him, her lips apart, the darkness of her wide eyes a shimmering violet.

"Did you know? Was that why you came?" In a whisper. Her face hung before him in the mid-gloom, vaguely visible, terribly like his hallucination.

"Yes . . . that must be why I came."

She nestled back, saying "Please don't speak to me, Richard, for a little while."

The spell of her seemed to shut them in. Fictitiously, from a strange distance, came the unsteady rush of the wind and the splashy sea-noises. She was alive and warmly real and infinitely woman. Gordon's questioning weakness was vanished before the face of her need, and his self-torment drowned fathoms deep in the sense of possession. He was quaintly alive to the commonplace: the rain chilled his cheek, the arm Audrey leaned against was numb, and his right foot cramped under him was going to sleep. Moreover, he was damply muffled in much clothes. Yet all these matters did not offend, nor intrusively jar, but were simply a part of joy, mysteriously harmonized in the deep reality of tenderness. The Kingdom of Heaven does not reject; it assumes.

The girl stirred. "Tell me how much you care."

"I care."

She shook her shoulders unsatisfied. "Not that way. That isn't what I want."

"I know. You're not ready yet for what you want, dear."

"Oh, stop thinking! There never was such a man as you, Richard. Will you never give me anything I don't drag out of you?"

In the pause he touched her hair with his lips—so lightly that perhaps she did not feel it. Presently she looked up at him.

"What do you mean?"

He answered slowly: "You aren't sure yet—of yourself—or ourselves. You *want* to care. No, I can't make you see. Perhaps I myself don't understand, but—I mustn't let you confuse love and loving."

"You don't want me."

He laughed.

"No—you don't want me. You don't."

"If I accepted almost you, would you ever have more to give me?"

She sat up, holding the back of her left hand before his eyes.

"Of course I noticed that ten minutes ago, child. What have you done with it?"

"It's overboard—tonight."

"Did you need to do a thing like that—to make yourself sure?"

"Richard—?" Her eyes were on his, with a look that was a faintness and a flame. As he bent over, she hesitated a moment, turning away her face. And then—the sweet shock dazed and blinded them like a violent blow. The girl shuddered back, whispering little broken phrases. The man set his teeth against dizziness. The dear wild thing in his arms was become his share of the world, her faltering breath the ebb and glow of infinity, the fragrance of her hair his meaning of life. And still he took note of the passing of time, ready to make an ending of their hour. At last Audrey broke the silence with the old, dry strain in her voice.

"Oh, my dear, my dear, I don't believe in all this!"

Gordon bit his lips. He understood, and yet the mere words hurt him.

"Don't worry yourself, Audrey; don't think; it's all right."

"No, it isn't. It's a dream, Richard. We must drop it, and forget, just as I said. Tonight's the end."

"It's only the beginning. Listen, dear. It's the suddenness and the difficulties and the melodrama of the situation that look unreal. We need time and commonplaces and a chance to make friends, you and I. We're safe. Only don't make climaxes. We can do or not do as we choose, if only we trust ourselves, and wait."

"I can't wait. I can't bear it. Richard, if you want me you must come to Germany and marry me before I lose hold. Oh, hold me, and don't let me go!"

"I'll do that, or anything, if necessary—but we mustn't lose our heads. Now you must go in before someone misses you. It's a scandalous time of night."

She sat up and pushed back her heavy hair. "Yes I must go in; and you must say good-bye, Richard—perhaps for always. I mean it—you don't know."

"May I hurt you?" Gordon asked slowly.

"I wish you would." Her smile was wonderful, if he could have seen it.

"Is anyone else"—he paused for choice of words—"is anyone else possible for you now—physically?"

She shrank as if he had struck her and stared at him with a wondering horror in her eyes. After a moment he bent down and kissed her quietly.

"God help me—no!" she said, and put her two arms around his neck.

A firm, even step approached; Gordon stiffened every muscle. Audrey did not move.

"Your aunt's looking for you, Audrey," Hudson said.

Gordon rose with difficulty and helped Audrey to her feet. The momentary walk through the wind-swept and heaving darkness was singularly

long and unreal—the chill, the numbness in his right foot, the two silent shadows by his side. He found time to notice that his knees were shaking, that his headache had returned with dizzy intensity as if to some other person, and that somebody was, absurdly enough, growing beyond question seasick. The chiseled wrath of Miss Folcombe framed in a yellow doorway was as meaningless as the empty words of good night. A door clicked shut, and the two men without a word turned back together whence they came. Gordon's attention was given to holding his teeth clinched and taking each step carefully. His hair was bristling, and he was hot and cold in waves, and his mouth was curiously dry. It was vaguely astonishing that his body continued to obey his will. Experimentally he worked his fingers. He had taken off his raincoat and was carrying it over his arm. Suddenly Hudson turned upon him and struck him heavily in the face.

Gordon reeled back, catching at something to steady himself. A black horror of physical fear closed over him him—not fear of a man, not fear of any injury or pain, only an agony to get away, to escape struggle, to hide and die. For an instant, he could have fallen on his face and cried for mercy; but there was a reason why he must not—he must not. It was a boat he was clinging to. He caught himself with a wrench that plucked loose the very roots of his soul, and rushed in at his enemy. He felt flesh against his hand.

There was a sick shock, and he was down on the wet boards. He struggled up and lurched in again, coughing. There was no skill in such a fight—only darkness, and the shuffling of feet and the blunt sound of blows, and the smell of sweat as the two bodies came together, and over all the ecstasy to do bodily hurt that is like the very passion of love, casting out pain and fear. Neither man could at all guard himself; but in darkness on an unsteady footing a man may strike at a face and miss. From the first, Hudson

drove with careful fury at the lighter man's body.

It could not last. Time after time Gordon was dashed backward in a choking heap. Again and again he scrambled to his feet and flung himself at the dim face that, as in a nightmare, he could not strike hard enough. Sometimes three or four blows went home, sometimes only one—and then the shock and the breathless pause and the renewal. No matter, he was still fighting. He had only to keep on—keep on. Both men were too angry to wrestle. If they closed, they fell savagely apart and fell to it afresh. If they slipped and fell, they struck out eagerly as they rose. There was very little noise. In the storm, one might have passed a few feet away unawares.

Presently Gordon fell sidewise against the rail, and hung over it, helpless, deathly sick. Hudson stood over him.

"Had about enough?" he asked after a moment.

The beaten man turned on him and laughed in his face.

"What's that got to do with it?" he snarled, and sprang at him once more.

Hudson stepped back and threw his weight into the blow. It missed. Then his brain splashed full of light and his ears hummed. The two clinched, swayed, swung and fell violently, Gordon's head under the heavier man's chest.

Hudson lay a moment, panting. Then he slowly rose, brushing his hand across his eyes. It came away warmly wet. He fumbled for his handkerchief and checked the blood. The limp thing on the deck did not move. He bent down and found the pulse—only stunned, of course. He deliberately put on Gordon's raincoat, turning the collar up about his face. Then raising the inert weight in his arms, he made his way aft. At the door of Gordon's stateroom a flurried steward asked what was the matter.

"Fell against a boat and hit his head," said Hudson calmly. "No, he's all right—knocked him out, that's all. Open this door for me. Now go and

stir up the doctor. Don't stop to talk about it."

He laid Gordon in his berth, and looked in the glass. No, he could not afford to be questioned. As he turned away Gordon opened his eyes. He looked bewilderedly about the room, saw Hudson, and tried to raise himself; fell back and closed his eyes again.

"Doctor'll be here in a minute," said Hudson. "How are you—all right?"

The eyes opened again and stared insolently into his own.

"You lose," Gordon said wearily. "Your game's played. Now go—I'm tired."

Hudson pressed the button and went out. As he shut himself unobserved into the safety of his own stateroom, he discovered fear.

The sense of unreality—of moving in a painted world where all things were and were not, and she herself a figure grimacing through a pantomime to be looked at with dry curiosity from a distance—hung about Audrey like a veil. Mercifully, it enabled her to face Miss Folcombe's midnight homily in an impervious silence. With nothing to say, she literally said nothing, and was not to be driven from that refuge; even when the kindly old lady, stung with the sense of exclusion—as if she were somehow trying to reach a wife—lashed bitterly at those sensitive places whereof her own womanhood reminded her. Audrey listened intact, intellectually conscious of hearing that which no woman may endure from another woman, and wondering why this image that was herself felt neither anger nor any shame.

"It's a pity you feel it so much," she said at the end.

Miss Folcombe gasped, "Feel it—it's nothing to me!" and went to bed in a sniffing gust of tears. Audrey wondered why she did not feel sorry for her.

All through the next day the veil thickened and increasingly she wondered at herself. In the afternoon Hudson appeared, and they had a long calm talk together, reviewing all the

facts of those immeasurably distant yesterdays when she had been cast aside from the rational levels of life by a wind of unreasoning emotion. Somebody was in calm agreement over these unfortunate but nowise miraculous matters. Somebody agreed that most highly strung people had at some time an outburst of impossible romance and that they themselves were fortunate in getting the distemper over with before their marriage. There was no danger now of any further disturbance to their solid and durable liking for each other. Somebody saw how different was this comfortable daylight from the fever-fit of an evanescent passion—which, rightly understood, was even a part of emanation from their consistent normality—a satellite, shot off burning into space as their world cooled and shrank to habitable proportions. Somebody was meeting the big, dumb man half-way in finding expression for these things, and felt an almost strange kindliness toward him. Somebody would have married John Hudson just then, as somebody had agreed to do some months before—if he had understood his need to bind her in that moment, and had taken care not to awaken Audrey, who, from the uttermost corner of herself, was looking dreamily out across duality and wondering whether a black eye would have had so coarse a look upon the face of Richard Gordon.

"I'd better speak to him before he leaves us in the morning," said somebody at last, "and put the whole matter finally out of pain."

"You'd better not see him at all," replied Hudson.

"Oh, there'll be no excitement—you'd better be in the room. Only I owe it to us all to tell him myself, I think. Goodness knows I've made enough trouble."

"What will you say?" slowly. "He won't believe you."

"No, but he'd take longer to believe in circumstances. Oh, just as you like, of course. It makes no real difference." Hudson looked long into her eyes, his battered brows bent into

a knot, reading and weighing all that he saw and knew.

"No," he said at length, "I don't see how it can alter the facts, if you control yourself. Go ahead."

Toward evening Gordon came out of a fever to find a note under his pillow. After a while he remembered putting it there in one of his past lives. He lay still in that pallid surprise of the senses that follows fever, watching the dancing shadow-globes on wall and deck, and thinking as hard as his head would let him.

"I haven't skipped a day, have I?" he asked the doctor an hour later. "When do we make Boulogne?"

"No, we're in the Channel now. We'll be there early tomorrow morning. How do you feel?"

Richard detailed his symptoms. "I've got to get off at Boulogne, you see."

The doctor scowled. "You're one bruise, and three of your ribs are loosened in front—if you were twenty years older, they'd be smashed in like an old basket. But it isn't that—you don't react properly—your nerves are all drawn. You've been dragging the vitality out of yourself, somehow—got anything on your mind?"

"Well, I haven't got much on my stomach."

The doctor grinned. "You're the only man I ever saw who could keep a secret when he was delirious. I think you'd better go on to Hamburg. You'll save by it in the long run."

After supper, Gordon succeeded in getting into his clothes. His head was hollow, and his hands and feet ran through assorted sizes. But he could walk after a fashion, and that was the main thing. He found Audrey in a corner of the saloon, pretending, as he came across to her, to be reading a magazine. At the other end of the room Hudson and Miss Folcombe were playing cribbage.

"Hello!" he said, dropping dizzily into a seat. "What is it you've got to say to me?"

Audrey put down the periodical.

"I'm glad you're about again. How do you feel?"

"I don't feel. Come to Hecuba."

She glanced across at Hudson, then back at him. "Why . . . you don't show at all."

Gordon laughed. "Oh, I got mine without any time wasted in spoiling my manly beauty." He stopped, looked at her a moment, and said abruptly and sharply. "Come, out of it—now—and say what you've planned to say."

The veil fell. The numbness melted, and all that lived in Audrey awoke in a breath to suffer and to struggle and to know. The speech that she drove herself to make was an agony, a grappling with that other self who had suddenly become a tyrant and a torturer, darkly glorious with that dearest, deadliest sin of a good woman—the frozen courage of renunciation.

"Richard, I—I want to tell you that it's all over. It's impossible. I think I love you in some beautiful, unreal way—but I shall never marry you, and I shall marry John. You don't believe that, but it's right and it's true, and it must be so. I can't trust or live with the part of myself that answers to you. It isn't me—it's above and apart from me, not for every day. I can't breathe the air you live in year after year—I should starve in it. I need a big, strong, earthly man, reeking with humanity. I must be the soul for the two, not he. You must try to understand and forgive me. I hate to hurt you, dear, but you will come to see that I did it only to be kind. I'm quite myself now, and I've found out exactly how I feel. I'm right and I'm sure; and you must face the fact and believe what I say. You must never speak to me again."

"Is that all? I'm sorry you've worked yourself into such a state."

"It is all. Believe it as soon as you can—and—good-bye."

He leaned back in the corner of the wall, gazing at her as upon an old and familiar thing.

"Do you think I don't understand? You're in a martyrdom—the devil's pet lie."

"You don't understand, Richard."

"Sit down. Why did you feel that

you must send for me to say these things?"

In the silence Andrey looked at last into the face of her other self.

"All that sort of talk is absurd, you see. And now I'll tell you why—because you are not going to bid a beautiful dream farewell. Instead of that, you are going to Paris tomorrow, with an impecunious fiddler by the name of Richard Gordon."

There was no magnetism of energetic will in his weary voice, no empire in his eyes. He was simply stating a fact grown trite with long possession. He had no sense of dominance, of meeting a great moment—only a certainty impassive as the consciousness of his own existence, that the truth was as he said. He had no triumph, even, no glory in winning the prize of the great struggle of his life that had made and proved him a man. He hardly felt just then any emotion of his love for the woman. Only, it was a trouble to find words for the emphasis of truism; and he was very tired. After a little pause he gathered words again, and in a few sharp, impersonal sentences outlined his plan, simply, clearly, so that even through the bright haze of her attention she could make no material mistake. She was looking at him with something of the overtaken, half-horrified surprise that his first careless heart-reading had brought into her eyes a week before; but there was a difference—an ineffable difference like the change in the melody he had made and played for her one night.

"And I might have married that man if he hadn't let me speak to you," she said at last, softly.

Gordon shook his head. "Wouldn't have made a bit of difference, dear. If you still think it would, we'll wait."

She turned her head away. "When . . . did I begin to care?" she asked.

He smiled his quaint smile. She read it.

"I know—but say when."

"When you jumped on me for losing my sand and asking questions—that day on deck."

Her eyes filled suddenly and she rose, holding out her left hand.

"Yes—you do know now. Good night."

She hurried across the room, head bent. Hudson stopped her at the door.

"Well?"

"You brute!" she whispered. "You brute!" and brushed past. There was that in her face which Hudson had never seen.

He stood a moment frowning. Then he shook his head like a wounded beast and followed her. Gordon looked at his watch and lit a cigarette.

Next morning after breakfast Miss Holcombe and Hudson were standing by the rail, looking out over the smoky, sun-twisted roofs and spires of Boulogne-sur-Mer. Miss Folcombe was pointing out objects of interest with a comment of mingled memory and Baedeker. Gordon came up behind them, violin-case in hand.

"Good morning, and good-bye," he said.

Miss Folcombe's bow was a model in its kind. Hudson said, a little awkwardly, "I thought you'd gone ashore earlier."

"I've been ashore since five o'clock. Where's Miss Dorne?"

"Perhaps," said Hudson slowly, "you'd better go before she comes up. You two said all you had to say last night, didn't you?"

Miss Folcombe had turned away to look critically at a laughing group of tourists who in turn were much interested in the steerage passengers. She had subtly included Hudson in the act, so that Gordon was somehow impalpably removed to a distance.

Gordon looked at his watch. "I'm going in just ten minutes. In the meanwhile—"

Miss Folcombe interrupted with a gasp. Audrey was coming toward them. It was the change in her dress which had astonished Miss Folcombe. Hudson, slower to translate observation, gathered his brows into an unsymmetrical frown as Audrey joined the group.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"We're going ashore," Gordon answered deliberately. "At half-past ten we're going to be married at the American vice-consulate. After that, we're going on to Paris on the eleven-eighteen."

For the second time Hudson was in the presence of the inconceivable. For the second time he showed no sign of wavering.

"Oh, no, you're not," he growled.

"Why?" said Audrey quietly.

"Because you are not going to do anything in a hurry. You're not a captive heroine, you know. There's no occasion for melodrama. And whether you see it or not, I want you to have time to decide your own future rationally, in your own way. Let me take your things."

Gordon had been watching, as if for an expected cue.

"Just as you like," he put in; "we'll wait, if you say so."

The iron bent. In the globe of silence which shut them in, Hudson looked from one to the other without understanding.

"Don't you see," Audrey spoke very gently, almost regretfully, as one refuses a pleasure to a child, "that it doesn't really make any difference—here and now, or at home after going over everything with father?"

Miss Folcombe spluttered into the pause with a half-hysterical invective.

"Wait a moment, Aunt Elma," Audrey broke in, "let's hear what John says."

The iron man turned slowly to the man of steel.

"You knew I could stop this plan if you told me of it?"

"Of course. What would be the use?"

The iron cracked and broke. Hudson bent his heavy head a little, as if he were shouldering up some great weight. Then he looked up steadily into the other man's eyes.

"In the Middle Ages, I'd have beaten you," he said. "As it is, I think I'll go to your wedding. Come, Aunt Elma."

Miss Folcombe caught at the rail, drawing breath for an outburst. Could a well-bred God behold these impossibilities and withhold miraculous fire? But the electric sense of a scene had spread over the twittering deck. There was a stillness, as in a meadow under the passing of a cloud. People began to whisper and to glance curiously their way. In the chaos of the proprieties, amid the shards of her universe tumbling about her chiseled ears, Miss Folcombe remembered her ancestors and became, after her own fashion, heroic. She threw herself conventionally upon Audrey's neck.

"Good-bye, dear," she cried in the voice of publicity. "I'll see you again at the station. And I hope you have a perfectly lovely time!"

And Richard and Audrey, clear-eyed against all the trouble before them, wise in the knowledge of themselves and of the battle wherein all victory is but a challenge and a beginning, went down together into the old-world city with Summer in their hearts.



## THE ULTRA-MODERN

By Sinclair Lewis

I KNOW one strangely skilled in tone and scent,  
A subtle master of exotic hours;  
Yet broods he joyless in his Orient,  
Forgetting how to love the roadside flowers.

## A QUESTION OF CONTRACT

By Johnson Morton

THE plan of serving the masses with mental refreshment in the shape of Sunday Afternoon Concerts at a nominal price of admission did not originate with Mrs. Manton Waring. But as the idea had been dropped casually by a visiting Englishman on the eve of his departure after a tour of philanthropic discovery through the States, that lady felt herself amply justified in pouncing upon it immediately, adopting it and bringing it up as her own. Indeed, so jealously did she insist on the prerogatives of parenthood, that when the plan had, so to speak, assumed the *toga virilis* of a proposition, she found herself in a situation of isolated responsibility, vibrating between pride and fright!

These two emotions combined in a definite course of action. She decided in the same breath to admit no other woman to a share of possible triumph, and to secure some man on whose shoulders she might place the burden of possible defeat. For that office, although *his* shoulders fell, alas, in an almost alarming slope, Mr. Mortimer-Merriss seemed the likeliest candidate. This gentleman had spent his life in exhausting the possibilities of polite careers. His eye was keen in the detection of easy currents; his ear sensitive to favoring winds. He hugged the shores of patronage and rode the waves of conciliation. Who shall say that he did not earn his fees?

Lately Mr. Mortimer-Merriss had deserted the profession of Parlor Lecturer for the fresher and more lucrative one of Society Impresario; the rostrum for the market-place, as it were. He stood, a frock-coated mediator, between

the desires of the employers and the needs of the employed, accepting a commission from each. Behind him ranged an army of profferers of artistic wares. Through him could be secured, for the fitting occasion, anything from a High Caste Brahmin to a Favorite of the Variety Stage who danced on bare feet!

Mrs. Waring's proposal, as the lady put it, was a trifle disconcerting to Mr. Mortimer-Merriss. It seemed to reverse all his ideas of procedure.

"I want *you* to get the audience," she had said, "and *I* will supply the performers, for I don't mean to pay a cent to anyone." Then, in answer to a sudden look of consternation in his pale eyes, she hastened to add reassuringly, "Except, of course, to *you*! You see," she went on, "these concerts will be given by our friends, all those nice amateurs who are so musical, and get very little chance to appear now that the standard is so terribly high. Don't you think it's nice to have a thing like this work both ways? I do. Amateurs. I mean, like that queer Miss Bagley and little Flossie Triller, who imitates people so cleverly, and Brocky Valpy, of course, with his violin—or is it the flute—and I suppose I'll have to ask Mrs. Tony Ellery, though if there're any French people in the room they'll run out when they hear her pronunciation! Oh, that wasn't kind of me, and you *must* forget that I said it! Never mind, it's going to be perfectly easy to arrange all that part, but your work, Mr. Mortimer-Merriss," she smiled up at him, "will be hard, and that's the reason I wanted a man to do it. Oh, how we women do depend on you men!"

Come, let's sit down here by the fire quite comfortably, and I will tell you all my plans."

Mr. Mortimer-Merriss accepted the seat and the homage with equal complacency. He made himself sufficiently at ease to rest a pointed toe on the fender beside his hostess's, and, with the fingertips of his outspread hands touching one another, in what he regarded as an effective and characteristic pose, turned a look of flattering attention upon her.

"The poor we have always with us," began Mrs. Waring impressively, "and do you know, that sometimes I think we don't do our whole duty by them! Of course, we give them work, and coal, and flannel, and soup, and stupid things like that; but aren't we all too often forgetful of the needs of the higher nature?" Mr. Mortimer-Merriss's head bent in thoughtful affirmation. Mrs. Waring cried out at the token.

"Oh, I *knew* you'd agree with me that it's really our fault that the poor go so often astray! You see, with theatres and things costing so terribly, even for seats where you can't see more than an edge of the stage, and no theatres, of course, on Sundays, when people who work all the week have so much time on their hands; it's small wonder to me that the saloons are full! Oh, they're not open on Sundays, either, are they? Well, at any rate, they have no place to go, the people, I mean, except the parks, and it's horrible there if it rains, and it generally does, especially on holidays, I've noticed, and then they have to sit in railway stations, someone told me, which seems a very queer thing to do; and you certainly wouldn't call the streets proper places for young girls unless they walk 'way uptown where there's nothing to see but nursemaids, and I can't say I blame them much, do you? So, it has seemed to me an excellent idea—to be perfectly honest it's been tried in London—for some of us to hire a hall and give a concert there every Sunday afternoon as early as three o'clock; of course it wouldn't be right to interfere

with the churches, or maybe it will have to be four, because most people have luncheon late on Sundays, when you come to think of it, and it should be made possible for anyone to come by paying ten cents, and the sum, if we have five hundred—isn't that a conservative estimate—would be fifty dollars, and Bohemian Hall, in spite of its name, they tell me that it's a perfectly respectable place, costs only forty. So that would leave ten dollars over at *least*, and would put the enterprise on a paying basis, which my husband says is always necessary for the principle of the thing, even if you don't care about making money, which, of course, we don't, except, of course—you'll pardon my speaking of it, but business is business—to pay you! And you *will* be willing, won't you, to make very low terms for us so that we may be sure of being able to pay you anything at all?"

Her listener coughed, as if choked by some disheartening arithmetical calculation of his own; yet he spoke with his habitual cheerfulness. His tone seemed to free the air of sordid consideration. "I think we can safely leave the question of emolument for further discussion, dear Mrs. Waring; and, in the meantime, may I ask, what will be the exact nature of my duties?"

"Oh, you are to see that the concerts are advertised"—the other hurried on—"not in the newspapers, unless you can get them to do it for nothing, but in all the places where the people we want are in the habit of going, pawnshops and those horrid little markets with meat labeled 'Nine cents, reduced from twelve,' and Chinese laundries. No, on the whole, I don't think we want any Chinamen, they might think we were trying to convert them—and the cheap restaurants, and those terrible dance-halls. These last are very important and you must give them your personal attention, Mr. Mortimer-Merriss! Then you ought to be on hand at the concert to make announcements, if anyone gives out, and perhaps you can turn the music for the accompanist—isn't it awfully good of

her to offer to play for us—dear Mrs. Launcelot Buttress?"

Mrs. Launcelot Buttress! Mr. Merriss, who had shriveled in his chair as the scenes of his future labors loomed darkly before him, regained of a sudden his normal size at the mere mention of this name. It stood for wealth, fashion, patronage, success, and to him it had heretofore represented the unattainable. Now came his opportunity. Visions of service by the side of this powerful, talented and eccentric lady dispelled the gloom of Mrs. Waring's suggestion. Why, Mrs. Buttress gave at least four musicals every season! With a little tact—and his spring was inexhaustible—there was no reason why he might not manage them for her. His half-hearted attention flamed to interest. Here was a means to an end, and he seized it eagerly.

"Well?" interrupted Mrs. Manton Waring.

"Your plan is admirable, dear lady, admirable," he declared with enthusiasm, "and I shall be delighted to help you with my poor services. Indeed," his enthusiasm carried him on to vicarious generosity, "I only wish that I could afford to offer them gratuitously as my little contribution to your lovely idea."

Mrs. Waring clapped her hands gratefully; and at that very instant—to Mr. Mortimer-Merriss the three words came like a veritable utterance from a shrine—the butler drew aside the curtains and announced, "Mrs. Launcelot Buttress."

Had Mrs. Waring been prone to analyze her impressions, she would have taken fright at the suddenness with which her visitors leaped into intimacy. As it was, she felt a pricking sense of uneasiness when they embarked on a conversation that seemed to hold no place for her. Their talk clung to music and abounded in mystifying technicalities. Mr. Mortimer-Merriss was ingratiating while Mrs. Buttress cooed with patronage. At the outset, the lady had mentioned her proposed musicals, and, five minutes later, the

gentleman had achieved his object, for Mrs. Buttress, crossing her plump knees and demanding a pencil, had taken down his address on her visiting-card!

Indeed, it was not until the two rose simultaneously for departure—Mr. Mortimer-Merriss elated by the prospect of a lift in Mrs. Buttress's carriage—that the series of "Concerts for the Self-Respecting Wage-Earner," as Mrs. Waring had about decided to dub her enterprise, was mentioned at all. Mrs. Buttress, with a wave of her large hand, had somewhat qualified her promise in regard to the playing of accompaniments.

"If only I am here, Gussie, darling," she declared, "of course, I shall be too enchanted; but Lanny, poor child, is rather by way of dragging me off into the country for luncheon on Sundays. He says that I lose my appetite in town. Still," she added reassuringly, "I shall make the effort!"

Mr. Mortimer-Merriss, on the other hand, spoke with no reservation. "So grateful to you," his intimate whisper breathed appreciation. "You may leave to me, dear lady, all the tiresome details." The pressure of his slender hand gave confidence. "Banish them completely from your mind! Now, the date is December tenth, is it not? Thanks! Oh, no; *don't* ask me to write it down." He shook his head; his eyelids fell reproachfully. "How could I forget!"

The work of arranging the programme for the first concert occupied most of Mrs. Waring's attention during the next week. Not that it was difficult to secure performers; quite the contrary. Thus early in the season, they rose to the invitation as hungrily as trout to flies in Springtime. Indeed, it was embarrassing to make choice from so many candidates. Mrs. Tony Ellery, with coy reluctance, had at last promised four *chansons*, including her latest, "Whose Baby Is Papa Holding?" Of this she had remarked:

"Although quite in the Yvette manner, *chérie*, it's perfectly proper, M. Malgié himself assures me. *Chic* but

correct, one may say: *Ma foi; c'est charmante, adorable!* Though for an *encore, hélas!* I suppose they'll simply insist on my singing something in English; *les bêtes, les canailles!*"

Brocky Valpy and Miss Birdie Hornblower started at once, under the guidance of a metronome, to prepare selections for the violin and piano with which to open and close the concert. Miss Bessie Bagley, a stout and strict young woman from Boston, balking at the secular had been persuaded to allow her somber contralto voice the latitude of a dull song by Brahms with scriptural words, and a nondescript Berceuse that failed to commit itself one way or the other. Little Flossie Triller, abandoning her imitations for the nonce, elected to appear in what its inventor—a parlor-entertainer and a Briton—had christened "Cantilations," a species of recitations set to music. Miss Triller, not to be outdone in originality, had wedged the text of Tennyson's "Lotus Eaters" to the melody of the "Ride of the Valkyries," and the result was sure to produce an effect of some sort.

Miss Lily Leider had been suffered to contribute once more her perennial success, "The Rosary," and there were to be banjo duets—"We must make *some* concession to uneducated tastes," Mrs. Waring had insisted—by the Longstreth twins, providentially at home from college for that Sunday.

The appearance of the programme when committed to print, a week before the date of the performance, was gratifying to Mrs. Waring. As she took one of the copies from the freshly opened bundle on her desk, and tilted it before her, the better to realize the good points, its completeness seemed to symbolize success and to confer a fine stamp of professionalism on the whole undertaking. Her own share of the work had certainly been done promptly and accurately, and she was inclined to congratulate her executive qualities as well, for had she not, quite in the large manner of a commanding general, delegated what she could not do herself to a compe-

tent lieutenant? Only that afternoon, Mr. Mortimer-Merriss, whose absorption in his profession seemed to make personal interviews extremely difficult of attainment, had responded to her latest call over the telephone.

"Oh, so glad to hear your voice, dear lady"; his words had rattled cordially. "Yes, indeed; all goes well. I *hope* you're not tired. You really mustn't take so much responsibility! Awfully sorry I couldn't see you Thursday or Friday. Tomorrow? Dear me, I can't come that day, either. How very unfortunate! But I'll hope to come soon. Oh, yes, I'll attend to the placards. I'll *tell* you about it when I *see* you; it's so unsatisfactory talking over the wire, don't you think? I'm very busy with Mrs. Buttress, arranging the *loveliest* musical—you'll be there, of course. I must thank *you* for that! Yes, you are, dear lady, indeed you are! It was so sweet of you! Certainly, I'll see to that, too. The date? How *could* I forget it! Oh, no, you needn't. Yes, yes, pretty good, wasn't it? Of course I will! I beg you not to give the matter another thought. I wish I *could!* Thank you, I'm only too glad to help. I call it a privilege—privilege. You're awfully kind, dear lady; just leave it all to me."

So, secure at every point, Mrs. Waring felt amply justified in dismissing the matter—as Mr. Mortimer-Merriss had advised—and accepting an invitation to a ball in Philadelphia. She left very early on the following day, in somewhat hurried fashion, seizing at the last moment her morning's mail to be opened later on the train. Among her letters were several from the performers-to-be, and of these, each and every one, after clamoring for changes in the arrangement of the programme, contained some sort of a plea for the admission of various friends to the concert. Miss Bagley's, as beffited her serious mind, was most explicit of all. It even adduced reasons.

"In Boston we have found," she added to a request for the presence of an aunt, three sisters, four cousins and a nephew, "that the most satisfactory

results in the amelioration of conditions, social and psychological, are obtained only by the amalgamation of *classes*—if we can allow to ourselves the existence of this entirely artificial term—and the value of the effect of each on the other has been proved conclusively to be both immediate and inestimable."

Before arguments like this Mrs. Waring's conservatism could not stand. She leaned forward from the plush embrace of her chair and touched the bell. She called for a table and removed her gloves. She borrowed a pencil of the porter, and tore its fly-leaves from a book she had thought to read. On these—eked out by telegraph blanks and the backs of envelopes—she wrote a carefully composed list of friends likely to "amalgamate," to whom invitations might be sent. By the time she had finished she had come, as usual, to regard the idea as her own, and it was with positive enthusiasm that she added a few words of direction to her secretary, Miss Umbrage, and despatched a fat envelope under a special delivery stamp from the Philadelphia station.

Even amid the gaieties that followed the ball and extended her proposed three days' stay to the last possible moment, Mrs. Waring never lost sight of this attractive idea, and acquired the habit, whenever a new and likely name would occur to her, of seizing opportunities and pencils simultaneously, and, in this way, she sent off many a hurried note.

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Waring did not leave for home until early in the morning on the very day of the concert. A particularly tempting dinner party had decided her to stay over; and really there was no reason why she should not! The few hours of leeway that she gave herself were sufficient, for there was very little to be done. So after sending two telegrams—her husband's had ten words and Mr. Mortimer-Merriss's forty-seven—she dismissed the subject from her mind. But, alas, in her calculations Mrs. Waring had made no allowances for the surprises of railway travel, and

after an hour's pleasant speeding, she looked up casually from her book at the sudden stopping of the train. When after an interval there came no sign of renewed motion, she looked up again, this time anxiously, and peered out of the window. There was no station visible; only a crowd of men by the side of the track, regarding the open landscape vaguely. Mrs. Waring hurried to the platform where, catching a brakeman with her question, she learned that a freight-car had broken down a mile ahead, and there would be, in all probability, "some little delay." This proved a euphemism, however, for hours dragged on and already the hands of the familiar clock, which ought to have stood at eleven, were pointing to *two*, as she hurried from the train and flew through the station of her own city to throw herself into a cab and call breathlessly to the driver:

"Bohemian Hall, please, and go just as fast as you can!"

The building, of which Bohemian Hall occupied the second story, presented a far from hospitable welcome as Mrs. Waring vainly attempted its door, and while she waited impatiently for a response to her ringing, she had ample time to notice, with a sinking of the heart, that the boards flanking its entrance were bare of the large and alluring posters which Mr. Mortimer-Merriss had promised so glibly. "The janitor must be a very incompetent person," thought she, "and it may be well to speak sharply to him." Instinctively her attitude stiffened at the sound of a turning key. The door opened and she found herself confronted by a small shock-headed boy who regarded her with mild eyes.

Two minutes later Mrs. Waring was in possession of many disheartening details. No; he was only the janitor's son, and his father'd gone off for the day because he'd never heard no more about the hall. Yes, 'twas a lady that had hired it last month; but she'd never come again, and pa thought she'd skipped. Most ladies did skip, you couldn't pin 'em down. Oh, if

she was the lady—already Mrs. Waring's dimpling charms had begun to take effect—'twas all right, he guessed. It was ready, the hall was, and the piano was still there. She was lucky because the Daughters of Rebekah, they were elegant ladies, had their meeting Saturday night, and it couldn't be moved out on Sunday! Yes: he supposed he could take the money at the door, if she wanted him to and would pay him extra, and not tell pa. Wait a minute, and he'd make a light so she could go right up.

Mrs. Waring swallowed divers emotions as, watch in hand, she climbed the dark and dizzy stairway, and kept her attention fixed on the indisputable fact that it was already a quarter-past two. But with the concert arranged for three o'clock, to indulge in rage or regret were useless. The situation called for nothing but action. She found herself in a long, dark room with a platform at the end, on which, as the janitor's boy succeeded in rolling up each reluctant shade, disclosed themselves a pair of red plush arm-chairs, a reading-desk to match, and a square piano swathed in a rubber covering. To this platform Mrs. Waring mounted. A touch of the keys raised her drooping spirits somewhat. The piano was in tune, and behind it she discovered to her great satisfaction a music-stand, sure to be demanded by the violinist. She accepted these manifestations as omens of success, and gave quick orders to her already adoring slave. Windows were opened; the reading-desk was taken away; the chairs pushed back; the piano wheeled to a point of vantage; the benches straightened, and by the door a small table placed at which the janitor's boy was to sit, by-and-bye, as it were at the Receipt of Customs.

Successive peals of the bell had sent him hurtling down the stairs from time to time to admit the various performers. Already Miss Triller was finding fault with the acoustic properties of the hall. Miss Bessie Bagley tried to explain in signs from one of the plush chairs that the handkerchief

tiered over her mouth rendered her speechless but at the same time protected her voice, while Mrs. Tony Ellery, positive as to gown and superlative as to hat, practised her Gallic nuances before a glass. Brocky Valpy's violin and the banjos of the Longstreh twins had chosen the same time for a protracted period of tuning, and a band of accompanists, each satellite to a star, twinkled aimlessly about the stage.

In this scene of excited preparation Mrs. Waring's spirits rose. She was plied with questions; she rendered decisions. The demand for her attention was gratifying. She felt that she had already forgiven the non-appearance of Mrs. Launcelot Buttress, whom rumor, in the person of Mrs. Ellery, had reported as out of town. But the defection of Mr. Mortimer-Merriss was as bitter as it was inexplicable. The realization of it would not down. Hopefully, at each fresh sound of the bell, she would turn to the door. No; it was only the inquiring look of the janitor's boy that she met. The ringing grew more frequent; her watch stood at ten minutes to three. She glanced around the room; all the performers were accounted for; she waved them behind the scenes. Of course, the concert must begin whether there was anyone to hear it or not. At the door she met the boy as he came springing up the stairs.

"Say, ma'am," he called to her breathlessly, "hadn't we ought to let 'em in? The audience has come!"

"And, Manton, it *had*!" Mrs. Waring looked up impressively at her husband from the floor of her own drawing-room, where she sat some hours later arranging heaps of ten-cent pieces in even stacks. There were also stacks of quarters and half-dollars and a goodly array of bank-notes. "Please remember that nine and seven are eighteen," she interpolated, "for I must tell you the rest and I don't want to go over all this again! Where was I? Now, you've put me off the track. Oh, yes! When that nice boy opened the lower

door the people came rushing in. Old Mrs. Troutmann was the very first one. She had Cousin Mary Dolliver with her, and they found the stairs hard work. I'm glad I'm not stout! Cousin Mary was rather cross, too. 'Mercy, Gussie,' she called to me, 'what do you mean by keeping us all out in the cold? I've been waiting *hours!*' Behind them came a perfect crush of women, Manton, and outside I could hear nothing but the slamming of carriage doors. I took my place by the table, but, of course, I didn't have any change, and perhaps 'twas just as well, for if I *didn't* they had to leave their dollar bills and things, don't you see, and really in that way I got more money. After all, it made the business part much simpler, and I dare say 'twas all the same to them, though your Sister Cynthia made a great fuss, and I suppose, for the sake of peace, that I'll have to give her back \$4.90—just *think* how much difference that will make! She had nothing but a five-dollar bill. Don't you think she's sometimes a little *close*, Manton?

"Well, people kept coming and coming. The stairs were black with them—awfully nice people, too. It was like a matinée at the Opera—and I couldn't leave the table because the boy had to go to a storeroom and bring out some camp-chairs, for I saw there weren't going to be seats enough. Still they crowded in, and it was a quarter-past three before they stopped at all, and Mrs. Tony Ellery kept coming out and finding fault because we didn't begin. She said she had another engagement at quarter to four, which was inconsiderate of her, to say the least, when she simply *insisted* on not appearing till the last part of the programme."

Waring, meanwhile, seated on the floor by his wife's side, had been counting the money systematically and now, adding carefully his neat piles of coins, he looked up to interrupt her.

"By George, Gussie," he laughed, "you've done well financially, at any rate! See here; I make your receipts

foot up to exactly seventy-two dollars and forty cents!"

Mrs. Waring laughed back at him.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she cried, "and just think, there are absolutely no expenses except the programmes and the hall and a dollar ninety-five that I gave the nice boy out of my own pocket—do you think I ought to count that?—forty and nine—sixty—seven—"

"But you told me you had made some sort of business arrangement with what do you call him?—the fellow with the hyphenated name!"

Mrs. Waring clapped her hand quickly over her astonished husband's mouth.

"Oh, Manton, now you're spoiling everything, and I won't have it! Just think, you nearly made me forget the point of the whole thing!" Then she sprang from the floor and paced dramatically up and down the room. "Listen," she began again, "when I looked into the hall, Manton," she spoke rapidly and with some show of mystery, "I could see that it was packed. There were even some men standing up against the wall, and a good many girls sat in the window-seats. I must say that I was proud of such an audience—the women had on awfully good clothes—and I think it was quite wonderful that I got it just by sending those little notes that I told you of from Philadelphia. I don't suppose I wrote more than sixty. Of course, it was different from what I expected. There wasn't anyone there poorer than Cousin Carrie Abbott; but then, Manton, you can't deny that success is success! Well; I saw that they were getting impatient, for they clapped a good deal and Mrs. Tony Ellery kept sticking her head out of the stage door and beckoning wildly to me. You see I had really a tremendous responsibility. So, of course, I motioned to them to begin and took my money—I had it in this bag that I borrowed of Lucy Ballard—closed the door, and started to find a seat that she'd promised to save for me. I'd scarcely gone a step before I heard the greatest noise outside; it sounded like a thousand people

coming up the stairs. I flew back. By this time Brocky Valpy was tuning his violin again, and that Hornblower girl was striking *a's* on the piano. I put my finger to my lips as I opened the door—everybody was turning that way—and stepped outside. Manton Waring, I was never so surprised in my life! There stood Mr. Mortimer-Merriss—he was puffing so from running upstairs that he couldn't speak—and behind him crowded the queerest lot of people that you ever saw. I was so astonished that I couldn't speak either—but he found his voice pretty soon and began to apologize profusely. I really think that he felt mortified. You see he'd mixed things up, the dates and all that, and he hadn't done anything that he'd promised. He'd been so busy with Mrs. Buttress that he'd neglected me! I believe that woman's at the bottom of the whole thing. No wonder she didn't dare to show her face! Only that morning he'd found out—I dare say 'twas my telegram—and late in the day as it was he'd done the best he could, and would I please pardon him! I'd told him to get an audience, and really he'd brought one with him. Do you know, I pitied him so that I believe I should have forgiven him then and there, if he hadn't stooped down and whispered in my ear, 'I got them through the Salvation Army, dear lady,' he said, 'job lot, isn't it, but better than nothing!' Better than nothing, indeed! After all my success! That was too much for me, Manton, and, do you blame me?—I threw open the door just like this—" Mrs. Waring waved a hand broadly in recollection, "and said—pretty coldly, I'm afraid—I'm very sorry, Mr. Mortimer-Merriss, but you can see for yourself: there's really no room for you and your friends." Then, for Brocky Valpy was beginning to play—really, he scratches less than people tell you—I simply *had* to close

the door again, and Mr. Mortimer-Merriss bowed, very snippishly it seemed to me, Manton, the man's not a gentleman—and turned to go downstairs, with all that mob groaning and grumbling after him. And now, what makes you think I owe him something—don't laugh like that—when he never did anything at all?"

Waring shook his head whimsically.

"Simply because there's room for a difference of opinion," he answered. His bearing grew suddenly judicial. "I dare say you're right from one point of view; but from another there's a good deal to be said for Mr. Mortimer-Merriss. After all, Gussie, he did deliver the goods! You can't get around that. It seems to me that we have here a question of the delicate shades of interpretation in the law of contracts. Now, if we take our premises carefully, the party of the first part—"

But Mrs. Waring was holding her hands over her ears.

"That's right; argue against your wife, if you will," she called disdainfully from the hearth-rug, "but I won't be spoken of as a 'party' and I refuse to listen if you're going to show your horrid lawyer side, and try to puzzle me just because I'm a woman! It's no news to any of us that you men will always contrive to stand by one another when you're in the wrong!"

"But speaking of men, it seems to me that if I were a man," Mrs. Waring stopped suddenly and came closer to her husband. Her hands were on his sleeves, and she looked up into his face smiling adorably with tender roguery, "if I were a man, and my wife had been away for a whole week, that I'd—

"Why, Manton Waring," her voice came an instant later muffled against his shoulder, "dear, you're awfully reckless! Barker could see us perfectly well from the dining-room!"



## THE BOND

By James Hopper

NOVEMBER 17: I did not think I could do it—and when I had done it, astonishment petrified me for several minutes.

He was passing down the trail to the river, his shotgun ready at the hip, his eyes furtive upon the thickets. I watched him from the veranda, and suddenly it occurred to me to try it. I had no expectation of success, for he was a good quarter of a mile away.

So, sitting on the railing, compressing my temples with both hands, I concentrated myself upon it: I called him, silently, with my will.

When I looked up, after the first effort, I saw that he was troubled. His steps were short and without decision; repeatedly he turned his head toward the house.

Again I centred myself upon an effort of the will almost rageful. When I looked up, he had stopped and was facing square toward the house.

I tried again; when I looked this time, he was coming. Hesitatingly he would take two steps, three steps, pivot, gaze regretfully at the copse where his hunting lay, then, compelled, he faced about and came on. And thus, stage by stage, called by my will, he came.

Finally he was in the garden, looking at me with a queer, foolish expression, like that of a well-trained dog which, suddenly carried away by some irresistible atavistic tendency, has rushed the bird he should have pointed, or eaten the rabbit he should have retrieved. As for me, as I have said above, for a few moments I was paralyzed with my success. Also I had an unpleasant feeling of having seen him somewhere, sometime, before, and not being able

to place him. I stood there, giving him no aid in his predicament.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered; "I beg your pardon——"

His accent was that of a Frenchman, and a Frenchman's also was the bristly pompadour upon his head, even though made of carrot-red hair, while the eyes blossoming beneath, in the midst of a florid visage, clean-shaven but for a rigid mustache, were blue and wide with something that was almost innocence.

"I beg your pardon," he was saying; "but could you tell me——?"

And there he stuck. He did not know what he wished me to tell him.

"I beg your pardon," he began again; "I beg your pardon"—then, with sudden resolution, "are there quail around here?"

I was recovering my wits in my amusement at his embarrassment. "Well," I answered, a little maliciously, "I've been told there are; but not in the house."

"Oh, of course, sir, I did not mean—I wished only—I should have liked to——"

"Won't you have a glass of wine?" I asked, remorseful.

He burst out in a frank laugh. "I will," he said. "I do not know why I came; but I will."

He proved a good fellow, with that mixture of culture grafted on a certain ingenuousness which is so often found in Frenchmen; and I showed him many things about my retreat which I do not show to persons who come much better recommended—and much more eagerly.

## II

NOVEMBER 18: As I woke this morning, instantaneously a thought came to me—one which should have come before. That man, the hunter who drank wine with me yesterday, is the man who lives in the cabin on the slopes across the valley, with the woman.

So, as soon as I was dressed, I went out on the veranda and trained my telescope upon the cabin, two miles across the valley.

When I bought this telescope it was to study the stars, but little by little I came to use it to observe men, whose antics are much more amusing.

Among others I trained my telescope upon him, the hunter who was here yesterday, upon him and his companion.

From my veranda the ground to the south falls away in a gentle descent to the river bottoms. On the other side of the alluvial plain it rises again in long, tawny slopes. On these slopes, two miles in a straight line from me, and some five hundred feet higher, I suppose, on the edge of a pine-grove, is their cabin. I can look through my telescope at the spot, and it leaps to my sight as if offering itself for dissection.

They came two years ago—or at least, he came (he was alone at first). By himself he built the cabin, hewing the trees, planing the logs, setting them one on the other, plastering the chinks with adobe. It was interesting to watch him; such earnestness, such fervid energy, such expending of effort—and not a sound to tell of it. The axe swinging, chips flying—and not a sound; log falling upon log, the hammer flashing—and not a sound.

When he had finished, in three months, he brought the woman. She had a languid, clinging, nestling charm of manner, an oval visage, with thick strands of hair brought smoothly down both temples, and her eyes, I thought, but could not make sure (the blur of the telescope), were brown, liquid brown, I fancied, with golden glints in their

depths. I surmised a romance—a mad romance of dreamers defying the Laws, superbly hitching their chariot to the stars—and forgetting that the stars have their inexorable orbits.

I observed them, I think, for several weeks. But the thing grew monotonous (since a certain event in my life, the happiness of others is not a joy to me). They lived in a sort of lethargy of love. No one ever came to see them; they never went beyond the limits of the little plateau upon which their cabin stands. Most of the daytime they would be sitting on the veranda railing side by side, his right arm about her waist, her head upon his shoulders; swinging their heels like children, they looked out upon the golden land and the azure sea. There was something weird in the feeling of security shown in their every action, their every gesture, in the serenity of her upward looks, the calm assurance of his downward glance. There they were, fled from the world, withdrawn into the sweet solitude of their love, of their romance—and they were not alone; an eye, all-seeing like that of God, and without the charity of that of God, was upon them.

I exaggerate. Really, I did not abuse my power. As I have said, happiness to me is not now interesting. I stopped looking after a few weeks; I forgot them. And now I realize that I have not looked upon them for over a year.

And the reason I look now is this: I surmise that a change must have occurred in their relations. A year—a love so extravagant as theirs goes a far evolution in a year! A year ago, certainly, he would not have gone hunting, leaving her alone. I am again curious.

## III

NOVEMBER 19: I wrote yesterday—and it was the last thing that I wrote yesterday—that the relation of the two idealistic lovers, up there on the mountain-tops, must have changed.

I am a prophet. Changed they are, these relations. This morning, he killed her.

I saw the whole thing. When I got up, almost with the sun, it was with a new zest in life. I had an interest. As soon as I had dressed, I stamped out upon the veranda and trained my telescope.

They were standing at the foot of the steps of the little cabin. His shooting-jacket was on and his shotgun was under his arm. She was against him, her arms about his neck, her eyes turned up to his.

But her eyes did not look into his eyes—for his refused and went from side to side. With his left arm (the right was engaged with the gun) he was trying to loosen her tender hold, and at intervals he made a shuffling movement with his feet, as if, decidedly, he were starting off. But she clung to him with a languid tenacity.

Finally he raised his right hand, his left hand went up after it, doubling the grip on the gun—and with a sharp, short movement he brought the stock down upon her head.

No sound, of course, came to me, but I imagined it—a dry, smart tap.

Her whole form seemed to liquefy, and she crumpled to the ground, her arms sliding from his shoulders, and then down both sides of his body to his feet, as if in a long, limp caress.

#### IV

NOVEMBER 20: Today he has been burying her. It was hard work—the ground must be rocky—and I could see the perspiration rolling down his face, which was very red.

When he had made the hole, he lowered her into it, and then dropped after her a golden poppy. (He is a sentimentalist, that man, evidently.) He refilled the hole and packed the earth in a neat mound.

I want to talk to that man. He interests me. I fasted today (I find that this increases singularly the power of the mind), and tomorrow I shall call

him to me. It is far, but my will is strong.

#### V

NOVEMBER 21: I have had certainly a most interesting day; the exhilaration of it is still in my veins like wine.

As soon as I was up this morning—and I was up early—I was at my post of observation. But for a long time I was disappointed. The little house was shut; nothing stirred except, once in a while, the shadow of a cloud which, sliding swooping across the golden land, undulated over the little black mound in front of the closed door.

But after a while the door yawned, and he came down the steps, his hands in his pockets; I could see his chest rise and his nostrils distend as he drank the clear bright air. Suddenly he came upon the grave; he stopped abruptly, with the movement of a man who, walking the street, sees a piece of money at his feet. He stood there a while, his hands in his pockets, contemplating it with a semi-critical expression. Then he picked up the spade, which lay near-by just as he had thrown it the night before, and with it began to pat the mound into a shape more satisfying to his orderly soul.

It was then that I called him silently, across the still valley.

At first he seemed to feel nothing, and my brain reeled to the effort. I had to rest. I began again. Without raising his back, bent at the work, he turned his head, and over his left shoulder looked long toward me.

He resumed his earth-patting. After a while he straightened up and swung full toward me, his spade hanging at the end of his limp arm. A frown was upon his face. When he turned back to his work it was with a jerk of resolution. This time he stayed at it long, and I began to lose hope.

And then, when I was just on the point of giving up, he rose with a brusque movement, speared the spade into the ground, and leaving it sticking there, took several steps to the

extremity of the plateau; standing at the head of the trail leading down to the valley, he raised his right hand in a shield over his eyes and looked long and earnestly.

Then, on tiptoe, he circled the grave, looking to the right and to the left; he went around again, in a wider arc; a third time he circled, and the widened circumference took him along the edge of the plateau, clear around the house. Then he returned to the head of the trail and looked.

He stood there long, motionless as a statue, and my heart was pounding my ribs. He swung about, took a few steps toward the spade, came back without having reached it, and, hesitatingly, with a queer childish expression of guilty curiosity, came down the trail. For a hundred yards or two he was in the open, and I followed him easily; then the trail plunged into a copse of manzanita, and he was almost lost to me. Only, at times, his head, appearing above the foliage, showed me that he was still coming, coming to my call. He reappeared in the open, and down a smooth spur he slid as if drawn by a magnet. Then he was swallowed up in a ravine. For a long time he was out of sight, but still tethered to my will, for finally I saw him spring up, as if out of the bowels of the earth, upon the nearer ridge. When he had left the mountain and was on the road leading across the bottom of the valley, he again was lost to my view. I left the telescope, and sitting on the veranda railing, kept at my silent summoning. I forgot myself in this, or perhaps he came faster than I had calculated, for the next thing I saw of him he had come into the garden, and, seated on the stone dial, was mopping his perspiring face, his apologetic eye upon me.

"Hello!" I exclaimed. "Glad to see you. What can I do for you this time?"

He took off his straw hat, and his red pompadour sprang up bristling; then, sponging his brow, and very much embarrassed, he said, "A drink of water, I think."

"Come on in," I said, a little amused.

I sat him at the table, placed a decanter of wine at his elbow, sat myself opposite him, then, after he had sipped his glass, leaning across the table and looking him in the eye, I said: "Why did you kill her?"

He looked at me very calmly; in fact, I might say that the damp embarrassment which had suffused him now let him. But his baby-blue eyes were round with question.

"You would not understand," he said after a moment.

I leaned farther across the table and whispered a short sentence in his ear.

He gave a little start, then contemplated me long with curiosity, his head cocked to one side. "Ah, you also," he murmured finally in a rising inflection, with a little bow that, somehow, subtly raised me to equality and intimacy.

"Then maybe you will understand," he added after a time.

He was silent again, as if seeking his words "Have you a cigarette?" he asked.

I gave him papers and tobacco, and very carefully he rolled a cigarette, lit it and blew from his rounded mouth a series of halos that ascended slowly, followed by his intent gaze. "I loved her no longer," he said, as he inhaled a new supply of smoke.

I nodded my head slowly in comprehension. "But," I said, an objection arising; "if she loved you, you had, of course, some duty toward her."

"But she did not love me any more," he said.

I lost myself in retrospection. Then, "If you didn't love her and she didn't love you, why didn't you part?" I asked.

He threw at me a look full of reproach. "I thought you would understand better," he said.

"I think I understand very well—better than you think," I said; "but I want confirmation."

"Confirmation," he repeated, looking at his little finger as it dexterously flecked the ash from his cigarette.

"Very well: She would not admit that she had ceased to love."

"Admit—to you?"

"To herself; to me and to herself."

"Of course," I mused, "she wouldn't; that's just it; you have stated the case: she wouldn't."

"That is just the way with all of them," he broke out, suddenly excited. "They cease to love, just as men do; but they will not admit it—and they cling on—"

He had left his chair now, and was pacing to and fro, his nerves all a-tingle. "They cling on; they cling, they cling—good God, how they cling!"

He took hold of his throat as if to release a pressure upon it. "I choke," he said, "just when I think of it. God, how lead-heavy can be two arms when there is no love! Their embrace—it is like the garotte, their embrace: it chokes, it chokes!"

He strutted up and down; he pulled at his collar; really, I thought he was going to have an apoplectic fit. But at last he neared the table, poured himself a glass, threw it down his throat, and suddenly grew calm.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "this is a subject upon which I am still, you see, somewhat—excitable. I suppose time will arrange all that. I beg your pardon."

"I understand thoroughly," I said. "And you need have no fear. Of what I saw, through my telescope, I shall never breathe a word."

"I thank you," he said simply. "It is a subject—hardly to be discussed—between gentlemen." He bowed.

I think I shall see a good deal of him in the future. There exists between us a singular bond of sympathetic understanding.



## THE DEAD AND THE QUICK

By Edith M. Thomas

THE sky was steel, the wind, a knife.  
I passed by Trinity's old graves,  
Close-crowded by the city's life—  
And yet, the city saves!

The wind did search me through and through,  
When, looking past the pale, I read  
The name of one that no man knew—  
A long, long century dead.

Oh, then—I know not whence nor why—  
A breathless thought arose in me:  
"He is alive, as much as I,  
Or I am dead as he!"

## A HERITAGE OF THE HEART

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

HE had waited so intensely for the moment, her ear strained for the sound of his footstep in the hall, that when his brisk knock actually came at the studio door her heart gave a great leap with the happy shock of it.

"Harold!"

"Hello, Jean! How fine you look!"

The careless words brought the color to Jean's cheek as if they had been a lover's. "A new gown, dear, worn in your honor."

He gave her a quick, approving glance. "It's all right. I like you a lot better in those quiet colors. Sometimes your taste is a bit vivid."

She smiled happily, ignoring the brotherly qualification. Had she sought excuse she could not have explained that the vividness was an intrinsic quality of her appearance and personality which the most inconspicuous dress could scarcely obliterate, for being an un-self-conscious woman she had not very definitely recognized the fact herself.

She drew forward the most comfortable chair for her brother and seated herself near him on a lower seat.

"Harold, I am so proud of you! Just to think—five thousand dollars all your own, won by your own good work! Yet I was sure all along that you would win that prize. What fun it will be to plan what you will do with it."

He leaned back comfortably and ran his hands through his thick hair. "Oh, I have planned already."

Her loving eyes rested upon his face. They were beautiful eyes—her only noticeable feature—but they had never

looked more lovely than at that moment. "I can't wait to hear about it."

It was a moment before he answered a little slowly, "I have been anxious to tell you, too."

She recognized in his tone some suggestion of reserve or restraint, but she waited, careful not to betray any anxiety, smiling at him as she had always smiled in his interest since her mother, dying, had left him in her care. "Be a mother to little Harold"—she had never forgotten those, her mother's last words, and all that her mother had meant to her in the first peaceful sixteen years of her life was bound up in her love for her brother. Twelve years she had worked for him, cared for him, listened to him. In the deepest sense she had been a mother to him.

"I suppose it will seem pretty crazy to you," Harold began, "but I can't help it if it does, Jean. I am going to get married."

"Married!" She echoed the word faintly. For a moment the room moved about her. This the end of all the waiting to have her boy to herself for a little! She had never expected to absorb him, but just for a little while to enjoy with him. She had by extra work saved some money. When the news came of the prize he had won she had thought they might at last take that long-talked-of trip to Italy together without his encroaching too much upon the generous sum he had earned.

Habit summoned the kind smile to her lips. "Tell me about it," she managed to say.

"It is Elsie Griggs, the girl I met up there. You know I wrote you a lot about her."

Jean nodded. "I remember."

"I'm—well, I guess I'm sort of dotty about her. She's different from any girl I have ever seen." Harold's belief in the absolute novelty of his feeling was complete and unassailable. "She's like some little white flower—only her cheeks are pink."

"I want to know her." Jean was able to speak quite naturally by this time. "How soon can I meet her? Won't she come to visit me? I would love to have her. I have an extra room here."

Harold glanced slightly about the little studio apartment.

"I don't know. She isn't used to a little crowded place like this. She has a beautiful big home up there and when she comes to New York she stays with some relatives on Madison avenue. That is one thing that has worried me—it seems so sort of selfish to take her away from all that." He referred the matter anxiously, unconsciously to Jean, with his old habit of consultation.

"If she loves you—as of course she does—she won't think of that. But surely, dear, she could spend a little time with me, too—even if she visits her relatives—to give me some opportunity to know my new sister."

"Of course you ought to have the chance to know her," Harold agreed uneasily. She saw with increasing apprehension that there was some qualification that he had not as yet expressed. Then it came out with direct boyish brutality.

"The fact is, Jean, that I don't just care for her to meet your crowd. She isn't used to anything at all—well—unconventional. She has been very beautifully brought up. I'm afraid the ways of the studio bunch wouldn't seem just right to her. And somehow I can't bear to think of those men around her."

"Why, Harold!" Jean couldn't grasp it all at once. "There is nothing wrong about them, or I wouldn't like them."

"Oh, no, not wrong exactly," Harold assented, without agreeing.

"Some of them may be a little careless in their manners sometimes. Men who have talent are not always what we call gentlemen in the social sense; but then neither are the men in fashionable society. The men that come here may sometimes say things that it would be just as well for a very young girl not to hear, but wouldn't she be just as likely to hear such things in her own set after she is out? I am sure any of the men I know would be very charming and careful with a young girl like your Elsie."

"Oh, I dare say they might behave well enough," Harold replied uncomfortably, "but the kind of men that hang about you are not the kind I want to have know Elsie."

"Harold!" Jean could not keep the shocked hurt out of her voice. "Most men care equally about their sisters."

"Yes, of course," Harold replied hastily. "But you are older and have always gone your own way, and somehow I didn't seem to realize it until I cared for Elsie. I have never gone about with you so much, you know. I just knew there was a bunch of men around with something queer about their hats and collars."

Jean thought quickly, questioning if blame really belonged to her.

"They are the people I have met in my work. We have the same interests. I couldn't afford the other kind of society—Elsie's kind—if I wanted it. I am afraid it would seem less interesting to me, anyway."

"And the girls you know look sort of untidy compared to Elsie's friends. They do their hair queer ways—at least some of them do."

Jean reflected that pompadours and crisp stocks and shirt-waists were not the rule in her circle, and that it was natural that such dainty conventionality should seem more charming to a fastidious, young, inartistic judgment like Harold's. Jean looked up at her brother without any trace of resentment on her sweet-tempered face.

"She could come a little while and not meet my friends—since you don't care for them."

"That would be a little difficult, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, no; I could arrange it quite easily." Jean leaned forward eagerly and met her brother's eyes. Then she knew all. Harold was even reluctant—it was too incredible—about having Elsie meet *her*—Jean, his sister! She leaned back with a sudden sense of faintness. Harold's voice came to her as from a distance.

"Of course I want you to meet her before the wedding. I have told her all about you, and she thinks you have been just bully about me." It was evident that Harold expected her to respond with joyous appreciation of this recognition.

Jean smiled faintly.

"The time for the wedding is set, then?" Harold had not even consulted her!

"In two months." Harold brought out the fact with a perfect glow of pride upon his wholesome, boyish face. "I wanted it sooner, but she said she couldn't possibly." Then the habit of depending upon Jean's sympathy came over him in a little rush. "Oh, Jeanie, you can't imagine how pretty she is! See!" He opened his watch and exhibited a photograph set in the case.

Jean took it with cold, trembling fingers. For a moment she feared to look, and for another moment she looked without seeing; then she saw it quite clearly—the face of the girl who was to be Harold's wife. The picture, it occurred to her, might have been cut from a popular magazine illustration: a healthy young face, surmounted, as Jean had divined, by the inevitable pompadour. The features were inconspicuously regular—a small nose and mouth, low forehead, round cheeks, the face of any dainty, undeveloped, crude young girl of the period, a few years out of school. To the loving eyes of the woman searching it with a passionate desire to see the best, it was baffling in its young, unwritten

individuality. What lay behind that mask of conventional young America? Harold's wife— The tears sprang to her eyes. She turned her face away.

"Harold dear—I can't help but think you are very young to marry. Couldn't you wait a year?"

Harold rose quickly. "Not on your life! It's all I can do to wait two months. Is that all you have to say to me, Jean?"

Jean brushed away the tears he had not noticed.

"Dear Harold, you know how I wish that you shall be very, very happy." She went over and took his face between her hands and kissed him softly. "There. I know you hate to be kissed, but you mustn't mind it today, when you are going away from me to be married."

Harold patted her hand lightly. "That's all right, but you haven't said a word about Elsie's picture."

"She looks very pretty, dear, as much as one can tell from a photograph, and—I am sure I shall love her, since you love her so much."

"You can't help that," Harold assured her; and Jean nodded, silently, bravely smiling.

## II

IN all her busy life Jean had never dressed with a greater consideration for detail and effect than for her call upon Harold's future wife. She discarded the black picture-hat, in which Hilary had painted her, in favor of a quiet fur turban. She decided against the trailing green gown with Chinese embroidery, admired of her studio associates, and put on instead a new black tailor suit. Her hair, she realized for the first time, was incurably unconventional. Its soft, irregular waves bore no resemblance to the marcelled locks of society or the smooth straightness of the débutante's pompadour. For a moment Jean meditated an attempt at the approved and accepted coiffure, but finally abandoned as dangerous that effort not to look "different." She

scrutinized her reflection in the glass, trying to see herself with Elsie's eyes—for the unimaginative standards of Elsie's class were more understood by her than Harold imagined. Yet it was with distinct apprehension that she met her brother's critical glance.

"Will I do?" She put the question with a little gaiety she was far from feeling. "Your shabby artist sister doesn't want to disgrace you."

"All right," he assured her unenthusiastically. Knowing his expressions as she did, however, she realized that she was at least negatively satisfactory in her quiet clothes.

Yet for all her disciplined unselfishness her heart was beating uncomfortably as they were ushered into the depressing green-and-gold glitter of Mrs. Waldron's drawing-room. A young girl came forward with a light rustle of silk skirts to meet them. For that first moment Jean could not see her face. She was conscious of Harold's introduction, "My sister, Elsie," and of a greeting in a high, young voice. She heard herself reply, and acknowledge the introduction to Elsie's aunt. Then her vision cleared and she looked into the eyes of the girl who was to be Harold's wife. She was prettier, in a way, than the picture had indicated—delicately tinted, with her soft coloring repeated and accented by her crisp, conventional rose-colored gown; a face with the soft freshness of youth like dew upon it, and yet—with an illusive suggestion of hardness, solidity, in its young lines. The impression defied definition, yet it was there.

Elsie was entirely self-possessed. She met slender Jean in her plain, dark dress with an assurance not untinged with patronage.

"Harold has told me so much about you and your pretty work," she said to her while Harold talked with the aunt.

Jean smiled back with her soft radiance. "That was charming of you both—to find time to remember me."

Elsie stared a moment before she reassured Jean.

"Oh, you mustn't feel that Harold has forgotten you, Miss Averill, if that is what you mean. Harold feels the strongest sense of gratitude to you."

The color rose in Jean's cheek. "I hope not—" she could not help a quick rejection of that sickening thought. She recovered herself instantly. "I only meant that I appreciated the unselfishness of your remembering me when you were together. For I know"—she was able to smile again by that time—"how difficult it is for Harold to talk of anything else."

Elsie decided that Harold's inconspicuous sister had an odd way of putting things, and Jean's quick mind registered a fear that she would always be in the position of explaining to Elsie what she meant.

At that point conversation became general, leading in the direction of the tea-table and ending finally in the seclusion of the two young lovers in the comparative remoteness of a window-seat, while Jean was left to the cheerless task of making conversation with Elsie's aunt, who seemed to regard her, in her character of artist, as a singular specimen from some remote sphere. Jean's mind, not feeling the pressure of any strenuous effort in the conversation with Mrs. Waldron, dwelt upon the idea of Elsie. Persistently as she sought to deaden her critical faculties, Elsie's personality presented itself as singularly unatmospheric—lacking, for all her dainty prettiness, in the sweet mystery of youth.

### III

Elsie came by appointment to return the call. It occurred to Jean with a little sense of hurt, yet without resentment, that the suggestion of an early afternoon hour had come from Harold with the hope of avoiding other callers. It happened after all—a little unfortunately, as Jean felt—that Hilary dropped in while Elsie was there.

It was some time since Jean had seen him. He seemed to her a little more bored, a little more disillusioned, a little less charming than formerly. Watching him as he exchanged commonplaces with Elsie, it was difficult to recall the spell he had once held for her, and she realized again a sense of self-congratulation at the strength which had enabled her to withdraw from the influence of that spell while she had felt it most. She was troubled, too, with a little uncomfortable sense of responsibility at his presence after Harold's openly expressed prejudice. Yet she noticed, with the habit of observing his varying degrees of interest, that his almost automatic semblance of devotion—his invariable manner with women—was, if anything, less apparent than usual in his attitude toward Elsie. She observed, too, that Elsie did not seem in any way disapproving of Hilary.

On the contrary, she blossomed into a sudden vivacity, and his little habitual turns of phrase—as actually impersonal as the verbal courtesies of a Frenchman—brought an elated color to her cheeks. Jean was almost beginning to feel apprehension on the other side, when Harold arrived, and shortly afterward Hilary left. As the door closed behind him Elsie turned to Jean a radiant young face.

"What a handsome man!"

Harold flushed and frowned.

"He is a talented man," Jean replied non-committally, forgetting, for the moment, that such a comment could convey nothing to Elsie. But Harold broke in sharply:

"He isn't at all the sort of man for you to know, Elsie! I am surprised that Jean would let him in while you were here."

"Harold!" exclaimed Jean, cut to the quick, "I didn't know he was coming! And I couldn't send him away when he came to the door. That stupid new elevator boy told him to come up."

That Harold should speak so to her hurt her inexpressibly, yet it was characteristic of Jean that she did not blame

him, but herself. Elsie glanced at her inquisitively.

"He is a friend of yours, Miss Averill?"

"Not an especial friend," Jean replied. "I have known him a long time."

Elsie turned to her brother. "What did you mean, Harold?"

Harold hesitated a moment, and then merely repeated, "I don't care for you to know him."

"I believe I have lost that letter with Mabel Watson's address," exclaimed Elsie suddenly. "Harold dear, will you see if I could have dropped it in the hall?" As soon as he was out of earshot she turned quickly to Jean. "Has Mr. Hilary a bad reputation? Is that what Harold meant?"

Jean hesitated, looked at Elsie, and had a little shock. It was no shrinking or withdrawal that she met in those young eyes, but rather a sparkle of interest, excitement. She reminded herself immediately that it was the girl's very innocence—inexperience—that made the idea seem interesting to her.

"Dear child," she began gently, "I know of no reason why you should not know Mr. Hilary. He is a well-known painter and there is nothing particularly wicked about him so far as I know. He is not a man of high ideals, or one whose acquaintance would have any very real value for one. Harold spoke as he did out of the feeling of reverence he has for you."

Her brother returned before Elsie could answer, with the information that the lost letter was not to be found, and Elsie, smiling brightly, responded, "I am so sorry I was such a bother. It was in my muff, after all."

Jean reproached herself afterward because the whole little incident left her vaguely troubled.

#### IV

SHE scarcely saw Elsie again before the wedding, and it was not until they

were all back in town in the Fall that Jean had any opportunity to become acquainted with her new sister-in-law. Her anxious eyes, studying Harold's face after the four months' absence, could find no trace of the disappointment which she had, without acknowledging the fact to herself, feared for him. And for this assurance she was unselfishly, unreservedly thankful. After all, Elsie was a mere undeveloped child who had never in any sense touched life up to the time of her marriage. Undoubtedly she had expected too much of her.

One day, to her great surprise, she met Hilary at one of Elsie's afternoons. And once she caught Elsie returning one of his impressive glances with a little look of coquetry that startled her. Yet Hilary, when disengaged from general conversation, elected to stand beside Jean instead of availing himself of the empty chair next to Elsie—a fact which brought a hard little glitter to Elsie's eyes.

In answer to Jean's commonplace that it was a long time since she had seen him, Hilary looked back at her with a sudden hurt brightness in his eyes.

"Why should I come?" He spoke with a hardness most uncharacteristic of his social self. "It only stirs up old wounds."

Jean accepted a pink cake from a plate proffered by a pink young friend of Elsie's. "I didn't know you were on my sister-in-law's calling list," she observed irrelevantly.

"I met her first at your studio," was Hilary's reply. It caused her a quick pang of discomfort.

"When did your acquaintance progress to this point?" Her simple manner of putting the question robbed it of any awkward directness.

Hilary stirred his tea. "Has it progressed?"

She looked back at him steadily, waiting for his answer.

"To what point, *par exemple*?"

"Well—to the calling point."

"Oh, why—I ran across her in the Summer at Southampton. I was

painting Mrs. Bertram there. She is quite a pretty little girl, isn't she?"

As Jean did not answer immediately he looked up and met her eyes. They were quite grave.

"Don't, Mark," she said in a low voice.

He laughed. "You never used to take me so seriously."

Then, as she was about to answer, someone came up and interrupted the conversation.

About two weeks after that, walking about a picture-gallery, she came upon Elsie and Hilary standing together before one of his pictures. Having had the advantage of seeing them first she was able to meet them quite naturally, yet she fancied that Hilary, as well as Elsie, was embarrassed by the encounter. After they had walked around for a time together she said to Elsie in Hilary's hearing:

"I wonder if I could persuade you to come right home with me now—if you are still in the mood for pictures—to look at those old family portraits that have come down from storage? Harold has spoken of them several times. He wanted you to select what you wanted."

It was after a perceptible hesitation that Elsie answered:

"Why, I suppose I can."

On the way home Jean chatted easily of indifferent things to her silent companion, but after they were in her studio and looking over the portraits she found an opportunity to introduce Hilary's name.

"Mr. Hilary is interesting about pictures, isn't he? Had you been about the gallery much with him today?"

"Why—I think we had seen about half of them when you came up."

"Harold doesn't care much for pictures. I suppose you have almost as much trouble as I used to to get him to go to an exhibition." As Elsie did not respond, Jean continued, "So I expect you were glad to run across Mr. Hilary there."

Some little cheap sense of envy in the girl suddenly overflowed.

"I didn't 'run across him,' as you express it. He asked me to go with him. He wanted me to see his pictures."

The color rose and ebbed in Jean's cheek. "That was very wrong of Mark. He shouldn't have asked you to go with him. You are just a young girl and don't understand such things, but he knows that he shouldn't have asked you to go alone with him."

Elsie laughed. "No, he should have asked someone more mature—like you, for instance. Shouldn't he?"

Jean's reply was characteristically gentle. "Yes, far better. There would have been no impropriety in his asking an older married or unmarried woman."

Elsie rose quickly. "Jean, I hadn't supposed you were such a cat! Harold always led me to believe you something quite different."

Jean, disregarding this remark, replied still gently: "Harold would not like it at all—what you did this afternoon. Had you thought of that?"

"Oh, go and tell him, by all means," retorted Elsie. "I never knew such an old fuss-cat as Harold. I'd like to see the woman that would tell him everything. He's too impossible."

Jean's face became very grave at this outburst. Finally she said, "I had no idea of telling Harold, although it seems to me he ought to know of your acquaintance with other men. But I think you ought not to do such unwise things, Elsie—things that would hurt him so terribly if he knew. I know you love him enough to wish not to hurt him."

"Of course," returned Elsie irritably. "What else did I marry him for—not money, certainly." She began putting on her furs.

"Then you won't decide about the pictures today?" Jean asked.

"Oh, why—" Elsie flung an end of her fur back over her shoulder. "You might as well have them all sent over and we can choose what we want there. It's hard to tell here."

With a short good-bye Elsie departed, leaving Jean deeply troubled.

## V

THE next day Jean met Hilary in a friend's studio, and chance providing them with an opportunity for tête-à-tête, she deliberately brought up the subject of Elsie.

"It was very thoughtless of you, Mark, to ask my little sister-in-law to go alone with you to see the pictures."

Hilary glanced at her with a little bitter laugh and did not answer directly.

"It might have been if I had done so," he said at length. "But in point of fact I asked them both, and Harold couldn't go. You seem always glad to think unpleasant things about me, Jean."

A little absently she tried to atone for her injustice. "Forgive me, Mark. I had not understood that." What she did understand left her with a sick sense of fear. She could hardly doubt, after her conversation with Elsie, that the invitation had never reached Harold.

A few days after that, walking home across the Park at dusk, she passed Elsie and Hilary walking in the opposite direction. Neither of them, apparently, saw her.

One evening that same week Hilary dropped in to call and found her alone. Her mind uneasily absorbed with the thought of him as a possible enemy to Harold's happiness caused her to make but perfunctory answers to his remarks. She was startled when he broke off in the middle of a sentence to exclaim with almost savage bitterness:

"Just what have I done, I wonder, to make you treat me like this! You aren't this way with other men."

"Like what? I don't understand you, Mark."

"So—superlatively indifferent. Your negative feeling seems so intense that it is positive."

"Don't say foolish things, Mark. We have gone over all this before. There is no use in bringing it up again."

He looked down, his face hardening. "It was foolish of me to come. You don't care whether I come or stay away; whether I live or die."

She interrupted him gently. "That is not true. You know I always like to see you. But you must remember that you hurt me and disappointed me very much once, and when I got over that hurt I felt differently about you and always must. Now don't let us talk about it any more."

"I am different now, and anyway—I have never really cared about anyone but you."

"Please, Mark—"

He rose sharply. "We had better not talk about anything then, tonight. I am afraid I can't be a very entertaining guest."

She rose, troubled thoughts of Harold uppermost in her mind. "Don't go, Mark."

For answer he picked up his hat and stick; then he came back to her where she stood under the swinging lamp. As he looked at her, her irregular, piquing beauty sent a pang through him. He believed firmly in that moment that if Jean could love him it would work a transformation in his careless, selfish life. He waited, tormented by the sight of her, yet feeling that she had something to say to him. In the end it came out bluntly for all her troubled consideration.

"I thought I saw you walking in the Park the other day with Harold's wife."

He looked into his hat a moment before he answered.

"I was walking in the Park with Mrs. Averill—Wednesday—if I remember correctly."

Jean's face became serious.

"Please, Mark, please don't flirt with that child. She is young and quite inexperienced. Except for Harold she has only known college boys. She won't know how to allow for your little ways and speeches. You might possibly turn her head a little bit—" she broke off, then with the thought to keep her plea from sounding too serious, added with an attempt at a smile, "Take someone your own size, Mark."

Hilary examined the head of his stick critically before he answered.

"My dear Jean, I don't want to seem lacking in any sense of chivalry for

your charming young sister-in-law or in appreciation of the sacredness of youth and innocence in general; but you must not imagine Harold's wife to be too awfully unsophisticated. The girls of her set seldom are, and if they are, they don't stay so. In any case she is quite able to look out for herself."

"In any case—please keep away from her."

As he met the cold displeasure in Jean's usually soft eyes it stung him to hurt anger and uncontrol. He gave a short laugh. "It is rather more to the point that I stay away from you." And with a hasty good night he left.

A few days after that Jean, dropping in to call on Harold and Elsie, found her brother alone. He was working with a litter of papers spread out over his desk. She fancied that he looked tired and older. Her heart went out to him, but she restrained herself from any caress, remembering his dislike of such demonstrations. She watched his face with the eyes of a mother as she inquired for Elsie. She saw that his expression changed at the mention of her name, yet with not quite the happy light, she imagined, that the thought of her used to bring.

"Oh, Elsie is well. She seems always busy with a lot of things. She has so many friends. It doesn't seem as if I saw anything of her any more. I am working pretty hard now—even nights, half the week."

"Poor boy." Jean laid a light hand on his hair. "I can't bear to have you work like that."

"I guess she finds me pretty stupid, evenings. I'm not just used to harness yet, and the work seems to make me sort of dull."

"Of course she doesn't think any such thing," Jean reassured him with a sinking heart. She bent softly and kissed his forehead. He put up his hand and held hers against his cheek. It was almost the first response he had given her since he had told her of his engagement, and it brought the happy tears to her eyes. After a moment she said: "I want to hear all about your work some day when you have time. You know how

every little thing that troubles you or makes you happy matters to me—always."

When Harold answered it was in a tone intended to be offhand, but in spite of her apprehensions for his happiness it brought a little sense of warmth to Jean's heart.

"Oh, you're all right, Jeanie. I'm not ever likely to forget that."

## VI

In her thinking on the subject, Jean came to the conclusion that Harold had no consciousness of any definite cause for unhappiness about Elsie. She knew him to be boyishly unperceptive, yet Elsie's acquaintance with Hilary could hardly progress far without his knowledge.

One day toward Spring when she knew Harold to be out of town on business, she decided to stop and see Elsie in spite of the fact that the welcome she received from her sister-in-law was seldom cordial. But Jean had come to the point of trying not to analyze Elsie.

Mrs. Averill, the maid told her, was out. From the hall Jean caught a glimpse into Elsie's room and saw a confusion of garments and a steamer trunk partially packed. Was Mrs. Averill going away? she asked the maid. Yes, the girl said, she had spoken of going for the week-end to the country.

While Jean stood there, undecided whether to wait or not, the bell rang and a messenger-boy entered with a note. Jean caught sight of Hilary's writing on the envelope. The next moment she was inclined to laugh at the absurd fear that had flashed across her. Yet some instinct made her turn in the act of departure and say to the maid, "I will wait a while for Mrs. Averill."

She went into the little drawing-room, and sitting down by the window thought deeply. The result of her thinking was the decision to write to Mark Hilary and ask him to call on her that evening. In spite of her lack of

success upon the last occasion she would approach the subject again with him. She went to the desk and sat down to write. As she did so her eye was caught by Elsie's large, coarse, legible writing on a piece of paper in the scrap-basket—a sheet torn carelessly once across. Certain words seemed to leap up to meet her eye without her volition:

Learn to forget me . . . Youthful mistake . . . Needs me in his life . . .

For a moment Jean sat motionless, icy chills sweeping over her heart. Yet it was characteristic of her that she did not pick up the torn letter to inform herself further, but instead changed her seat and stared out into the street with unseeing eyes. Suddenly it occurred to her that there might be little time to lose. She rose with an idea of calling upon Hilary at once in his studio. Then she decided to telephone first.

The shock of relief when she heard his voice at the other end of the telephone made her realize the extent of the fear she had felt. She asked him if he could call that evening, and his hesitation brought back her alarm. He had an important engagement, he said at last, and he was detained at that moment in his studio. Could she—was it asking too much—could she drop in there on her way home? He had a picture he would like her to criticize. The practical suggestion calmed her fears somewhat. She told him she would come at once. As she hung up the receiver she turned to find herself face to face with Elsie. The expression upon the girl's face was not pleasant.

"For a lady who criticizes other women for going to men's studios you seem to be quite busy with similar appointments."

Without answering, Jean said in her usual tone, "I didn't hear you come in, Elsie. Have you a few minutes to spare? What's this I hear about your going away?" She was shocked by the look of fear and defiance in Elsie's eyes.

"So," the girl replied at length,

"you have been prying about among my letters——"

"Elsie!" Jean's tone silenced the girl for the moment. She followed Jean into the little drawing-room.

"Where are you going?" Jean asked her directly.

"Well, really," Elsie indulged in a superior smile, "I don't know any reason why I should render an account of myself to you." Then after a moment she added, "But since you seem to have some curiosity on the subject—I am going to the Wilmerdings' for the week-end."

"With Mrs. Wilmerding so ill?" Jean inquired.

Elsie flushed and went over to the window under pretext of rearranging the shade.

"She wasn't ill enough to withdraw her invitation," she said at last.

Jean rose and began fastening her wraps. "I have no wish to pry into your affairs, as you have suggested, Elsie. But you must remember that although you are married you are still a very young girl and must be more or less ignorant of life. Also, you are my brother's wife, and as I love my brother very dearly, anything that affects his happiness is necessarily important to me. He loves you—as you must know—very deeply, and it seems to me that you sometimes do foolish things which would make him very unhappy if he knew of them. I only hope that you are not planning now to do something for which you will both suffer afterward."

Elsie's eyes, hard and unresponsive, met Jean's, and then glanced aside.

"Whatever I am going to do is my affair and not yours. And it is possible that I know a little more about life than you imagine. In any case, I will thank you not to interfere in my affairs."

Jean made no further reply and turned to go; but Elsie detained her with a sharp question:

"Was it Mr. Hilary's studio you were arranging, over my telephone, to visit?"

Jean paused at the door. "If you feel so strongly that I have no right to

an interest in your affairs, Elsie, I wonder that you feel at liberty to question me about mine."

Elsie moved so that she stood between Jean and the door.

"Are you going to Mr. Hilary's studio now?"

Jean met her eyes squarely. "I am not going to answer you. Please let me pass."

Looking as if she were struggling with an impulse to give way to the primitive instinct of restraining her guest by force, Elsie finally moved aside, and Jean walked swiftly through the hall and down the two flights of stairs outside without waiting for the elevator.

## VII

THE stumbling car, blocked half-a-dozen times in the journey to Hilary's street, strained her tense nerves almost beyond endurance. She reproached herself for not having taken a cab. Once she rose to do so, but the car at that moment had started. At last she reached the street. The door of Hilary's studio stood ajar and he appeared at once in answer to her knock. Habit summoned commonplaces to her lips. She fancied that he answered her absently, and taxed him with it with such lightness as she could command.

He looked at her curiously. "I am wondering to what I am indebted for the honor of this visit. Such attentions are not usual from you."

She hesitated. "It is not on my own account."

He laughed. "I had surmised that."

She rose and went nearer to him, looking directly into his eyes.

"Mark, it is a very difficult thing to say—what I have come to ask you. You must promise if I am mistaken not to speak of it to anyone—ever. I can trust you, can't I?"

He looked down at her, then suddenly caught her hand. "Oh, Jean——"

She tried to draw it back. "Please, Mark, I haven't time for that now."

"Oh, Jean, if you ever could trust me,

really—everything would be different."

"You must not talk about that now. I have come to see you about something so terribly important."

He dropped her hand with an exclamation and began to walk up and down the studio.

*"Important—and does this seem unimportant to you! You have never understood. You have simply eaten into my whole life. I can't get away from you. I don't want to care like this. You are absolutely heartless with me. You—"*

"Mark!" The anguish in her voice made him pause. "If you really care you will stop talking about that and listen to me now."

"Well—what is it?"

"It is about"—she hesitated a moment, then said it directly—"it is about Elsie, Harold's wife. I am afraid that she is planning to do something very foolish—perhaps even disastrous, and if she is—I may be entirely wrong—but if she is, I must prevent her, if possible."

He stood looking down, apparently intent upon the pattern of the rug; he spoke without lifting his eyes.

"Well—what is it that you are afraid of, and why have you come to me about it?"

"Oh, Mark, don't you understand? I have been afraid that you—I saw a note come for her just now directed in your hand, and from the way she acted I was afraid that she was going to have some foolish meeting with you, perhaps. You know what Harold's happiness means to me, and he is absolutely devoted to her." Still he did not answer. Jean went on: "She is young and pretty and rather headstrong, I am afraid. I thought you might have become infatuated with her and—men are often so terribly selfish about such things—I thought you might both be drifting into some serious mistake."

Then he looked up. "There is no woman on earth who is of the least significance to me but you—only you in all the world. Whatever else I do is marking time—just trying to forget."

Jean fancied that she heard a sound in the room, but in her agitation her senses barely recorded the fact.

"Oh, Mark, that isn't what I want now. Give me a straight answer. Is there anything between you and Elsie?"

Still he did not reply directly.

"If Elsie—Mrs. Averill—has lost interest in her husband and is amusing herself with someone else, it is something you are powerless to prevent. You cannot give Harold back what he has lost—whatever you do."

"Oh, Mark, don't evade me, don't torture me so! You don't know how Harold loves her. If you know anything, tell me—" Her voice broke. He saw the tears in her eyes before she turned her face aside. He crossed the room quickly and took her in his arms.

"Don't, dear, don't do that. It's all right. Nothing shall happen so far as I am concerned. I give you my word."

She drew back from him, seeking to read complete assurance in his eyes; then suddenly she was conscious of a presence in the room.

"Elsie!" she gasped.

But it was to Hilary that Elsie spoke.

"Did you mean what you said to her just now?"

He looked back at her with a dazed expression.

"Elsie! Where did you come from?"

"In there," she nodded toward the alcove. "I have heard everything you said. I got here first. I knew she was coming."

"You came in and hid yourself while I was out—?"

She did not trouble herself to explain further.

"Answer me; do you love her?"

He met her eyes squarely. "Yes. All that you heard is true. I love her. I have loved her a long time."

"While you were making love to me—" she began passionately, but was unable to go on.

"I suppose I have been more or less contemptible about it," he said.

She interrupted him. "Then you

have lied to me all along. You don't love me——"

"I don't remember ever having said those words, but nevertheless I suppose I lied in effect. Only I never supposed you were any more serious until yesterday——"

"Mark!" The word broke from Jean in a cry that tore his heart. He turned to her as if Elsie were not present.

"It is true. I thought she was just amusing herself until——" Then he stopped. Whatever he had done he was not quite the sort of man to tell that the suggestion had come from Elsie, even had that fact carried any adequate exoneration. He covered his face with his hands. "Jean, you look as if you despised me——"

It was Jean who remembered Elsie.

"I know you did not realize the seriousness of what you were doing, child. No one shall ever know."

Elsie began to cry stormily. Jean went up to her and tried to take her hand, but Elsie drew back from her sharply. Jean turned to Hilary.

"Will you call a cab, please?" When he had left them she spoke again to Elsie. "Would you rather go alone?"

Elsie nodded without looking up. Hilary returned to say that the cab was waiting. Silently he accompanied Elsie. No further word passed between them. He returned to find Jean standing by the door looking very white and shaken.

"It doesn't seem right to let her go alone, but she didn't want me," she said.

"You don't need to worry about her." Then, before the look in Jean's eyes his own fell. "Oh, Jean, if you had stood by me this thing would never have happened."

"That doesn't take the responsibility from you, Mark."

"Perhaps not, but—you despise me, so I don't suppose anything I say will make any difference—but I wouldn't have played with a woman it would hurt. It is the truth, Jean. If I hadn't been the man it would have been someone else. Harold's happiness can never come through her. She is just a hard little girl in search of amusement."

"No," Jean cried, "don't say that. It is too soon to tell. She is young and she has had a pretty bitter lesson. She must have really cared for you to go so far as this—a conventionally brought up girl like Elsie. Perhaps this will make her more able to appreciate Harold's love and devotion."

"Perhaps," he assented. She moved to go. "You must let me get you a cab."

"No, thank you. I would rather walk."

"You are too tired."

"No."

"I suppose you don't want me to go with you?"

She shook her head.

"Jean," he caught her hand as she was going, "can you forgive me for my part?"

"Yes." She spoke gently but coldly. He bent over her hand in silence.



**M**R. JOLLY—There's one thing I like about Miss Barker. She never talks about anybody.

**M**ISS SNEERWELL—No, indeed. She spends all her time talking about herself.



**E**MPLOYER—Which newspaper do you read, Miss Gates?

**S**TENOGRAFHER—Whichever one the man next to me in the train has bought.

## THE SECOND OFFENDER

By Montague Glass

IT was Sunday in Ecquador, N. J., and Fifty-cent Joe Pendleton sat on the American House fence, idly fingering the huge tin star that adorned his breast. Anon he shifted his tobacco from cheek to cheek and spat emphatically in violation of the borough ordinance.

Only one other man in Ecquador could expectorate with impunity, and that was Judge Demarest. As constable and justice of the peace respectively, they represented the whole majesty of the law in the Borough of Ecquador, and if Fifty-cent Joe permitted himself the luxury of infringing the village ordinance, he made it up by keeping a sharp eye out for other offenders. Woe betide the luckless Ecquadorian who, within the sight or hearing of Joe, threw so much as a peanut shell on the cement sidewalk. Joe would hale him before the ever-sitting justice and the usual penalty would be inflicted—two dollars fine for the Borough and three dollars and fifty cents costs to the Court. Of the latter amount Judge Demarest pocketed three dollars and Joe the odd fifty cents; hence his cognomen.

A casual observer might have supposed Joe's presence on the American House fence to have been wholly fortuitous—a loafing and inviting of his soul, as it were, on that Sabbath afternoon. Not so, for Joe was attending strictly to business. He himself would have said that he was "layin' for 'em."

At frequent intervals an electric bell rang sharply on the American House porch, whereupon Joe drew from his pocket a battered silver watch. If in less than two minutes an automobile

came past, Joe followed it leisurely down the road. A hundred yards below the American House stood his horse and buggy with the hind wheels against the hedgerow on one side and his old brown mare grazing peacefully from the greensward on the other. It was Judge Demarest who in his office touched the button of the electric bell that sounded on the American House porch. Measuring from the constable's buggy, it was precisely half a mile to the judge's office, and if an automobile made the distance in less than two minutes, it exceeded the Borough speed limit of fifteen miles an hour.

A fine Sunday was Joe's busy day, for Ecquador lay midway between Dinglewood, the resort of wealth, and Round Hills, the haven of fashion. Its main street formed part of the macadamized thoroughfare that joins these two favored villages, and what between the unvary and the reckless, Joe and the judge netted a fine harvest of costs.

At three o'clock on the Sunday afternoon in question, the bell buzzed peremptorily, and hardly had Joe pulled his silver turnip from his pocket when a red machine whizzed swiftly by, only to grind itself into an enforced repose at the side of the constable's buggy.

Joe dropped from his perch on the fence and ambled toward the motionless car. Its only occupant was a woman whose swathing of veils and duster effectually negatived whatever charms she might have possessed and with them all her chances of liberty, for Fifty-cent Joe was a lady's man and easily influenced by feminine beauty.

"Is that your horse?" said the lady motorist sharply.

"Yes, ma'am," Joe replied.

"Well, that's no place to leave him standing," she continued.

"I hitched him that way a-purpose," said Joe calmly.

"On purpose," the lady repeated. "On purpose to wreck every automobile on the road, I suppose."

"No, ma'am," Joe murmured. "A purpose to ketch 'em. Yer see, lady, I'm the constable, and when an automobile makes the distance between here and the jedge's in two minutes, they're goin' too fast fer the law."

He smiled irritably.

"You did it in just thirty seconds," he went on, "so I guess you got ter come along up to Jedge Demarest's. If you'll turn yer machine around and go slow, I'll follow yer in the buggy."

The lady motorist started visibly.

"Do you mean that I'm arrested?" she said.

Joe drew back his coat and exposed the tin star.

"I hate ter do it, lady," he murmured, "but I may as well warn you that whatever you say now ter me"—he paused and tapped the star impressively—"will be used as evidence against you," he concluded in hollow judicial tones.

"But suppose I should turn on three speeds forward," said the lady, "and throw your old buggy over the hedge into the field? What would stop me?"

"I won't give you no argument, lady," Joe murmured soothingly. "But that 'ere buggy is loaded with two tons of scrap-iron."

Wherefore did the lady motorist steer her car about in a narrow circle and trundled slowly up the road in the direction of the jedge's office, while Joe followed still more deliberately in the buggy. At their destination she alighted and Joe led the way into the little court-room.

Jedge Demarest sat behind his desk at the further end and frowned severely as Joe entered with the culprit.

"What is the charge?" he asked.

"Exceedin' the speed limit," said Joe shortly.

The jedge glanced at the swathed offender.

"Kindly lift your veil, madam," he demanded.

The lady threw back the heavy silk gauze that hid her face, whereupon Jedge Demarest gasped convulsively.

"Constable," he called, "hand a chair to the defendant."

"The what?" she cried.

"You're the defendant, are you not?" Jedge Demarest muttered stiffly.

The lady sank into the chair which Joe drew forward and broke into a little rippling laugh.

"Defendant!" she exclaimed. "Mercy me, how terrible!"

She took a handkerchief from her sleeve and mopped her eyes. The jedge frowned again.

"This is no laughing matter," he said. "You are charged with exceeding the speed limit. What have you to say?"

The defendant lifted a pair of violet eyes and puckered her mouth into a delicious pout more calculated to provoke a kiss than a fine.

"What is your speed limit?" she asked.

"Fifteen miles an hour," he replied.

"That's not so fast," she exclaimed.

The jedge rapped his desk with a lead-pencil.

"Come, madam," he interrupted, "don't waste the time of the court. You dashed through this street ten minutes ago at the rate of thirty miles an hour. Isn't that so?"

The defendant nodded.

"Then you're fined ten dollars," said the jedge, "and three dollars and fifty cents costs."

The motorist wrinkled her forehead and her violet eyes grew darker. She was accustomed thus to evidence her distress, and on the instant each adjacent male would rush to her aid. At receptions, for instance, an onslaught on the refreshment tables ensued immediately and young men burdened with ices, sandwiches and champagne surrounded her in bustling confusion.

But Jedge Demarest was not a young man at a reception. His lay occupa-

tion was that of the boss painter and paperhanger, and therefore did he feel more keenly the dignity of his office. He took one fleeting glance at the defendant's flushed cheeks and fell to scribbling furiously in his dockets.

"I haven't any money with me," said the lady motorist piteously; "so you'll have to trust me and I'll send it to you by the first post tomorrow morning."

Jedge Demarest smiled, and it stole over the defendant that of his type the justice was not unhandsome. His clear-cut, regular features and long brown mustache had the appearance of masculine strength that little resembled the defendant's ordinary male associates. The young men of Dinglewood shaved clean, and they had weak mouths. Their hair, brushed flat against their scalps, might have been painted on, while the jedge's shapely head was surmounted by a strong thatch of brown, crisp curls. His teeth, the defendant noticed, were small and regular and he spoke in a low baritone that was far from disagreeable.

"You can leave your machine as security and bring over the money tomorrow," he said.

The defendant shook her head.

"I wouldn't trust my machine with anyone else. Besides, how can I get back to Dinglewood? I haven't any money, you see."

The jedge plunged his hand into his trousers pocket.

"I'll lend it to you," he blurted out.

The defendant clapped her gloved hands and her eyes sparkled with the light of new inspiration.

"I have it!" she cried. "You come with me to Dinglewood and I'll pay you the money there."

Jedge Demarest pondered and frowned, and the defendant couldn't help thinking how much handsomer he was in his sterner moments.

"Very well, ma'am," he said. "But in that event the costs will be five dollars and fifty cents."

The defendant nodded gravely.

"How long will it take," he asked, "to go there and back?"

The motorist smiled.

"It's ten miles each way," she replied, "and at the legal rate we can make it in an hour and a quarter."

"All right, ma'am," said the jedge. He rose and took his hat.

"Joe," he called to the constable, "I'll be back in an hour. Hold all cases till I return."

"But, jedge—" Joe protested as the pair climbed into the front seat.

"Ask your man to turn that crank in front," she said within Joe's hearing.

His face grew a dusky red and he sauntered off with his hands in his pockets.

"Hey, you, Joe," the jedge cried. "Turn that crank in front."

"Whaffaw?" Joe ejaculated.

"See here," the jedge replied, "this is business of the court. You're constable and you've got to obey the mandates of the court. So turn that handle."

Joe seized the crank and gave it a mighty twist. Instantly the machine pulsated violently and with a turn of the motorist's dainty wrist, they were off down the Dinglewood pike.

Covertly the jedge admired the deft fashion in which the motorist steered the ponderous machine in the middle of the road. For the first five minutes he remained silent and stole an occasional sly glance at the pink-and-white complexion of his neighbor. She had omitted to retie her veil, and it floated behind her in a follow-me-lads fashion, as they say in Derry.

At length the defendant ventured on a remark.

"Doesn't it run smoothly?"

"Does it?" he answered. "I don't know anything about 'em. A horse is good enough for me."

The motorist turned and looked at the jedge.

"This isn't your first ride, is it?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," said the jedge.

"How very interesting!" she commented, and turned on the second speed.

The jedge grasped his hat with one hand.

"Take it off altogether," said the defendant.

"Why?" said the jedge simply. "Am I apt to lose it?"

The defendant smiled and dimpled, and oh, shades of Cupid, when defendant dimpled every adjacent masculine heart leapt with joyous admiration.

"Because," she said slowly, "I like you ever so much better without it."

And then for the first time in ten years the jedge blushed. It began in the back of his neck and spread over his forehead and temples to the roots of his hair until his entire face grew fiery red with embarrassment.

He pulled his handkerchief from the skirts of his coat-tail and blew his nose violently.

"You're not catching cold without your hat?" she asked, not turning her head. "Because if you are, please put it on."

"Put what on?" he growled. "My hat? I never took it off."

"That's right," she replied cheerfully. "I didn't know you had a cold, or I wouldn't have asked you."

By this time the car was fairly leaping along the road. The jedge, after the fashion of all who ride in automobiles, felt only a sense of exhilaration, and speed ordinances were as far from his thoughts as Greek roots.

"This is great, isn't it?" the motorist ejaculated. The jedge nodded, and even as he did so the speed imperceptibly slackened and with a grind and a squeak the motor came to a dead stop.

"Are we there yet, ma'am?" the jedge inquired.

The motorist laughed gaily and jumped from the machine.

"I'm afraid I'll have to trouble you to get out," she said. "There's something the matter."

Then it was that the jedge tasted the Dead Sea fruit of automobiling. For two solid hours, aided by friendly chauffeurs and passing motorists of every description, they tinkered, hammered, jerked and hauled, and all without avail. The jedge was a willing assistant; he yanked the handle in

front till his arm was numb with fatigue. He sprawled on his back and twisted his neck about, but to no purpose. All this he did with a cheerful smile, and the lady motorist at length grew merciful.

"Jedge," she said, "you're certainly a man and you have the making of a first-class *mécanicien*."

There was a note of real admiration in her tones as she proceeded.

"It would be unfair to detain you longer," and she drew from her pocket a wallet of generous dimensions. "Here is the fine and costs, and I hope you'll——"

At this point she was interrupted by a tremendous spluttering on the part of the car, and a smothered cheer from the assisting motorists. A full-bearded chauffeur who had that instant joined the group stood with arms folded and bowed as the lady motorist turned to view her revivified machine.

"Me!" he said impressively, and tapped his chest. "I do it. Air feed, not so? No gravity feed, o-oh, no! You make little air cock turn by meestekk, eh? I turn him close. V'là?"

Everybody laughed and there was a general scramble for the waiting cars.

"Jump in, jedge!" cried the defendant. "I'll have you back at Ecuador in the twinkling of an eye."

The wallet clasped in her hand reminded her of the unpaid penalty.

"And please take this money, jedge, for the fine," she continued.

The jedge colored again and shook his head.

"I have no jurisdiction here," he said. "You'll have to pay it into court."

They resumed their seats and soon the motor was bowling along in the direction of Ecuador.

By no spoken word did the jedge evidence his annoyance, but the lady motorist felt certain, nevertheless, that he was in a towering rage.

"I owe you an apology," she commenced, at last. "I've treated you shamefully, and if there's any way that I can make good the wrong I've done you, please let me know."

They were maintaining a very moderate rate of speed and the motorist took one hand from the tiller and laid it appealingly on the judge's arm.

"Don't be hard on me," she continued. "I'm quite crushed. I'm just as repentant as I know how to be. Please—"

But the judge made no sign and the motorist withdrew her hand from his arm. She turned on the second and third speeds and pulled up with a flourish in front of the judge's office.

It looked like Longacre Square on a Saturday night. Against the curb stood automobiles of every make and description, from the low, rakish American car to the sky-scraping German machine, and over all Joe presided, with the whole peace and dignity of the State of New Jersey finding expression in his face.

"You're a nice one," he called in greeting. "A gallivanting around the country with eight ordinaries and two second offenders waitin' inside."

The judge jumped from the machine and strode angrily into the court-room.

"Bring her inside," he bellowed, and Joe whistled.

"What have you been doin' to him?" he asked, with a grin.

The lady motorist, head in air, flounced up the short and narrow aisle.

"Judge, I think I've humbled myself sufficiently," she said. "If you don't choose to accept the apology, be kind enough to take this fine and let me go."

She laid a twenty-dollar bill on the desk and started to leave.

"Not so fast, madam," the judge called after her. "We made that last mile in less than a minute." He smiled grimly through his long mustache. "And it'll cost you just fifteen dollars and fifty cents more," he continued.

"Why, judge," Joe interrupted, "it's a second offense. You orter make it twenty-five."

"I know it, Joe," said the judge, in clear, distinct tones that smote on the lady motorist's ears like a knell. "But if I'd been late for supper, my wife"—he paused and repeated the word impressively—"my wife would raise Cain with me, and the defendant certainly got me here in good season."

This time it was the lady motorist's turn to blush, and she did so in a very convincing fashion. She laid another yellow bill on the judge's desk and swept out of the court-room.

Her hand was on the ratchet of the tiller as Fifty-cent Joe rushed out on the sidewalk.

"Madam," he cried, "here's your change."

The engine was pulsating violently, and the lady motorist didn't even turn her head.

"Tell the judge," she said slowly, "he can take the change and—and give it to his wife."

And with a succession of defiant honks the car disappeared down the road in a cloud of yellow dust.



### HIS NOTION

"TELL me, what is your idea of hell?"

"Well, at any rate, it is no place for a gentleman."



BRIDGET—The way some livin'-out girls change their places is scandalous.

MISTRESS—Is that so, Bridget?

"Faith, an' it is. Every time I've been in the intelligence office I seen the same bunch sittin' there."

## THE DOMINION OF JOY

By Bliss Carman

**I**T does not take a philosopher to remark not only how volatile happiness is, but how variable and seemingly beyond control. Its sources are hidden among the springs of life; its volume and current, because they are so largely unmaterial and essential, appear uncertain; and like those rivers which lose themselves in the desert, its radiant stream is often dissipated in arid distractions and absorbing cares. Pure as a mountain brook in its origin, it too often frets itself away in a tortuous channel, muddied by passion, perverted by stupidity, or contaminated by regret.

Happiness is an essence which is so readily extracted from life at times, that one would suppose its formula might easily be learned. But it is not so. The soul secretes happiness out of experience as the bees secrete honey from the flowers of the meadows, not promiscuously, of course, nor indiscriminately, but always with consummate ease; and yet the process of its distillation, like the production of the honey, is veritable magic, and belongs among the natural mysteries. We know in truth very little of the making of this divine extract; for the most part we are willing to take it without question and spend it without care; and we are almost equally ignorant of any rules for its preservation, though it escapes more easily than any known infusion. It may appear in response to the wizardries of beauty, the summons of truth, or the impetuous demands of desire; and, without rhyme or reason, it may depart as quickly and inevitably as it came, leaving only

the vaguest recognition of the conditions that invite it. Certain general laws which govern happiness are plain enough for all men to understand, and philosophers have presumed to tell what are its components and stimuli, but how are we to command it with any accuracy or guard against its dissipation?

With such knowledge we should be lords of as much of the empire of destiny as any sane man need wish to rule. This is that secret which no oracle ever could declare, that enigma which no man could ever solve, the one problem which absorbs the emperor and the hod-carrier, the philanthropist and the vagrant, the duchess and the drab—every living figure in the whole tatterdemalion pageant of humanity—with an equal concentration and almost equal disappointment. You may write me learned treatises and expound pedantic moralities on the nature and sources of happiness, but what I want is a plain answer to a plain question: How can I be happy at will?

If I commit murder or theft or any crime against my fellow-mortals, it is easy to foresee that I shall be unhappy; for other beings are only extensions of myself, part of the same spirit, parcel of the same stuff, and I know instinctively that any violence against them is an outrage against the laws of my own being and an offense to my own spirit. You need not explain to me that nothing but unhappiness can spring from evildoing. I know that very well already. For I know better than anyone can tell me that the evil deed is born in blackness of heart, and

that happiness only visits a soul innocent of malice. Again, if I violate my instincts I know I shall be unhappy—if I eat or drink inordinately, if I am unreasonable and wayward and lawless in my habits, and fail to give rational care to my physical well-being. As a child I learned that I must not put my hand in the fire; as a man I am learning that I must not harm anyone else; and the first law does not seem any more arbitrary to me than the second. They both seem natural and inevitable and I begin to perceive that we cannot be happy in transgression.

Not to transgress, however, is hardly enough to insure happiness. The laws of inhibition are not guide-posts on the road to the land of heart's desire, but only danger signals; they point nowhere, they are only warnings against disaster, and while they may save the wayfarer from destruction, they scarcely advance him in the highway of perfection. You may abstain from every indiscretion, observe every rule of health, and still be a puny, ineffectual stay-at-home. You may keep every one of the shalt-not commandments, and remain a gloomy prig after all.

In the garden of the heart innocence and abstinence are hardly the finest flowers of conduct; they are rather the soil from which such flowers spring. The virtue of a man is the strength of his essential spirit, not his mere harmlessness or inactivity. Just as the only test for the virtue of salt is its savor, so the only test for the virtue of the heart is its joy. There is no happiness for us humans save in the normal exercise of our senses, our intelligence, our emotions. If we claim that privilege for all men, we shall have an ample creed enough, and if we attempt to secure it, we shall have a happy enough task.

The direct pursuit of happiness may indeed be futile; but the pursuit of our activities is not futile, unless it is ill advised; and from that pursuit, when it is legitimate, some essence of happiness is derived. Happiness comes to us not as a reward of merit, but as a

proof of worth. It is not a recompense for abnegation, but a natural satisfaction in normal life. It is not to be found in violation of eternal laws, for the simple reason that those laws, so far from being arbitrary restrictions imposed upon the human spirit, are merely the inherent laws of its own development and growth.

The Dominion of Joy is divided into three provinces or states—the state of mind, or the Province of Truth, the state of spirit, or the Province of Goodness, and the state of body, or the Province of Beauty. Like any worldly realm, its boundaries are invisible and its products inter-related. There is no saying where the province of sense ends and the province of mind begins, nor where either of them joins the province of soul. These demarcations exist in theory only, on the map of the imagination. As a matter of fact, you may pass from one to the other and never know it, just as you may cross the line from New York into Connecticut without perceiving any difference. While each may have its own peculiar traits and beauties and resources, with its own necessary laws and customs, industries and appurtenances, they are all equally under an inter-active government throughout—the great triune code of manners, morals and meditations.

The Dominion of Joy is as wide as the universe in which we dwell. Wherever the foot may tread and the soul subsist, there its beneficent power may extend. Its terminus is no nearer than the outmost star that glimmers within the sweep of vision. A flower by the wayside, a moonrise over the roofs of the city, a quiet sunset among the purple hills, the sudden flash of a passing glance in the street, the scent of some remembered perfume, a breath of Spring wind stirring the blind at an open window, the blessing of a beggar, the sight of a masterpiece in a museum, news of an old friend, a strain of music, the skill of an acrobat, or a seasonable word—any one of these trivial circumstances, if it be timely, may lead us instantly to the borders of this Dominion,

invest us with a celestial habit, and endow us for the moment with very immortality. It is neither a despotism nor a democracy, yet is wider than any commonalty and finer than any aristocracy. It confers upon its citizens the freedom of the world, and gives them a distinction of bearing, a radiant air, a commanding expression, such as no other aristocracy can bestow. There may be degrees in its social order, but the poorest of those who live within its rule is a more charming figure than joyless emperor or somber king.

Yet the great ones of the earth may be great in its roll of peerage, too; for as the blameless Roman said, "Even in a palace life may be lived well." It is not founded on the fanaticism of scullions, nor on the haughty ruthlessness of the strong, but on the basis of every man's normality. It has no peculiar costume, no national tongue, no racial features, no traits of character by which its inhabitants may be told. Its only signs are the laughing lip, the kindling eye, the kindly hand and the foot that is light upon the pavement. Other nationalities may blend and change, their characteristics may merge and vanish, but those who have been reared in the Dominion of Joy belong to a primitive tribe whose type is universal. They may vary in stature and in color, in contour and in motion, in gesture, voice and habit; they may be black or red or yellow or white, Hindu, Malay, Celt, Slav or negro; but under these trivial marks of latitude they are all of one breed, betrayed by the eager step and the radiant glance. Their speech may be a Babel of many languages, but there is no mistaking the elemental meaning of the tone of happiness, the inflexion which signifies content. Before mind had anything to say to mind or any words to say it in, heart had its confidences with its fellow-heart in soft caress and inarticulate sound. And today, so lasting are the traditions of joy, protestation and eloquence are superfluous between friends, and vain between those who have become estranged.

Beauty is the common tongue in the Dominion of Joy—beauty with its dialects of truth and graciousness—and whoever can speak in that language has an instant passport to the hearts of men. No man who expresses himself in terms of beauty can fail of appreciation; no matter what his nominal speech may be, his welcome is secure, his place prepared, his worth established. Moreover, those who give their days and nights to the study and practice of beauty, to the creation of loveliness in some form, are thereby qualified for citizenship in the Dominion of Joy and take on unconsciously the guise of its subjects. Those who cause beauty to arise in the world are rewarded by the afterglow of happiness in themselves, so near is dust to dream, so truly are human achievements a part of the divine.

There are many roads that lead to the Dominion of Joy through its different provinces, some of them broad and sumptuous, others inconspicuous and half hidden from view, some thronged all day long with travelers, others unfrequented save by an occasional wayfarer. But those who are really wise confine themselves to no single province of the great realm, for they know there is an unwritten law of the Dominion of Joy to the effect that no one shall be allowed to reside permanently in any one of its precincts, but all who come within its borders must share in all its influences and have some knowledge of all its resources. Sensualists have tried to pre-empt the delightful province of beauty, pedants have attempted to monopolize the province of truth, and bigots have endeavored to settle themselves immovably in the province of goodness, but all have found their purpose equally vain. For it matters not by what road one may first approach the Dominion of Joy, once within its borders, one must hold allegiance to its federal power, not to its partial interests.

The clamor of the imagination and the senses for pleasure, the call of the mind for satisfaction in reason, and the cry of the spirit for loving kindness,

seem to imply a distraction in our nature.

In reality these are not diverse demands, nor contradictory, but essentially identical—conveying the single wish of the personality for happiness. And never by denying any one of them, nor over-emphasizing any one, can anything more than a fleeting and perishable happiness be obtained or preserved. For happiness, that simple test of worthy effort, can be abiding only when it is harmonious and permeates all the regions of being. It cannot be obtained from any pursuit of the intellectual life, however single-minded and diligent, if that pursuit is carried on at the expense of pleasurable joys of health and thrilling impulses of generosity. No following of the so-called holy life can avail to secure it, if the body be marred and broken with wilful tyrannies and suppression, and the delightful mind crushed and restrained from its lawful reasonableness and spontaneous convictions. Much less can the nimble senses lay hold upon it for more than a moment at a time, if they have not regarded our hunger for knowledge and our love of impersonal goodness.

It is not easy to obtain the franchise of the Dominion of Joy, though no mortal is by birth ineligible for that fine privilege. Some indeed are born to it, perhaps by right of inheritance, perhaps by heavenly endowments; and even they may lose it by perversity or neglect. But those who do not dwell perpetually in its kindly air, its serene and fostering climate, may nevertheless prolong their sojourn there sometimes, if they will take some precautions and be at some pains to achieve so delectable and so noble a triumph.

Happiness, let us admit, is not a relative thing, as pleasure is, but a positive condition of the spirit regardless of surroundings, a fundamental state of being in which normal personality finds the justification and value of life. A man may be happy in the face of death, and wretched amid luxury. Frail women have gone to the scaffold for a cause with a smile

upon their lips, and sturdy men have dragged out useless years in palatial misery. You may environ a man with all the comfort that pampered fancy can imagine, and still fail to insure a moment's unmitigated joy in his heart. You may toss him upon a desert or transport him to Siberia with equal impunity, without obliterating his inward happiness, if only he happens to be one of the fortunate possessors of joy of the spirit. Pleasure depends upon material things, circumstances and events, and may be had in some measure even by the desolate, the selfish, the evil-minded. It is often a palliation of unhappiness, often a distraction of the desperate, but it can never be a substitute for primitive veritable happiness of soul and peace of mind. Joy cannot visit the malicious, the selfish, the cowardly or the dispirited; while two mortals talking together through the grating of a prison door may know the purest happiness. It only needs that they should be free in their spirits and capable of being happy together; the conditions will not matter, nor count for a feather's weight in the balance.

Since joy is coterminous with life, and life is in the moment and the hour, the protection of happiness must be a daily consideration. To create some little bit of beauty every day, even if it is no more than rearranging the flowers in a jar or making a habitation more bright and clean; to serve goodness every day by even the smallest act of courtesy or kindness; and every day to learn some fresh fragment of pure truth—these are suggestions of the necessary procedure for those who seek naturalization in the Dominion of Joy. To enhance the loveliness of the world of form and color as it lies about us, to widen the world of our knowledge and gain some helpfulness of wisdom and understanding, and above all to gladden and enlarge the world of sympathy and love where tender hearts have their tenure and questing spirits find their courageous hope: here is a threefold daily task for the strongest of souls, yet not beyond the compass

of the frailest of mortals; and here a magic talisman without which the pilgrim in the highway of perfection is more than likely to go astray.

But, O mortal, if ever it comes to your lot to dwell in that enchanted country, have a care, I beg you, to cherish your good fortune with incorruptible vigilance. For if once you lose that mystic franchise, that impalpable prerogative of liberty, that warrant and prescription of glory, you will not find it easy to be regained. To do any violence to your sense of beauty will imperil it; to profess any belief which you do not really hold, or

to cling to any creed which does outrage to your reason, or in any way to offend against the truth, will imperil it; above all, to stifle the welling love in your own heart or betray the trust of another will imperil it with an injury beyond repair. Then you would become a wanderer and an outcast, self-exiled forever from felicity, to roam through a world forever commonized and changed, where there is neither glamour nor elation nor courage nor hope; and if ever you came to the gates of the Dominion of Joy again, it is more than likely you would find their portals closed and unresponsive.



## BACCHIC

By Allan Updegraff

**D**OWN to the whist dawn sea,  
Slipped every tether,  
Waifs in entirety,  
We go together:  
Wild you with wilder me,  
This singing weather!

Malebolge, steel and stone,  
Put far behind us,  
Here we're our very own  
As Fate designed us;  
Let's not go far alone—  
Proteus might find us!

God! how the gold-misted  
Tideful of morning  
Breaks there to lucent red!  
Disbelief scorning,  
By that fired wavelet's head  
Lies Love a-borning!

Ocean and ambergris—  
Dawn, you, together!  
Give me your lips to kiss,  
My heart's a feather!  
Ah, methinks life is this—  
Love and wine-weather!

## IN THE DARK

By Inez Haynes Gillmore

**A**S he stood outside his apartment it seemed to him that he heard a door within open softly. The sound made him pause. He listened. It seemed to him that, with even greater softness, he heard it shut. Who could be in there? Vance was in the Adirondacks. Nobody else could have entered the apartment that summer.

His key grated in the lock even as these thoughts passed through his mind. He stepped from the dark hall into the black living-room. He made three steps forward and then he stopped as if he had been struck. He became conscious, in the pause that followed, of three things—an odor first; then, after an appreciable interval, a presence; then, an instant later, a voice.

The odor, delicately, charily, suffused the big living-room that he had expected would greet his nostrils with the stale smell of furniture long unaired and an atmosphere long devitalized. It was a wonderful odor, faint but subtle, provocative, deliciously compelling. It was compounded, it was easy to guess, of the personal aroma of some finely-flavored feminine substance and an oriental perfume, purring but uncloying.

The presence—he could not of course see it—but its emanations floated in the room, more miraculously permeating than even the odor. It was like a wonderful tropical flower that blooms unseen in the heat and the night, betrayed to the passer-by only by its exquisite breath. He could not see an outline. Yet, to his aroused intuition, the presence was as indubitably there as if every bit of furniture in the room

were shrieking the fact to him. The situation arrested his uneasy imagination. It thrilled it to a thousand conjectures, surmises, speculations. The explanation came to him in another instant. Vance! But hadn't he written Vance that he was coming to their rooms that afternoon? For the life of him he could not remember.

And then the voice.

The voice did not make him forget the odor—it did not make him forget the presence. Rather it was the odor and the presence become audible. It was an extraordinary voice, and how it stood the test of the dark! It was low, fragile, almost fluty. It seemed a little "world-tired" was the melodramatic word that he presently found for it. Had the Mona Lisa spoken, those, he decided, would be her tones. But under the world-tire in it fluttered—a mere nuance—but it shadowed something dreadful. Horror? No. Terror? Perhaps. And well she might fear—ah, Vance!

"Please don't light the gas," the voice pleaded.

He found his own voice after a while. It seemed when it did come to be unduly dry.

"I'll not light up, of course. I'll do whatever you wish."

A little rill of laughter thrilled through the room—laughter that, he could not have said why, terrified him. It was cool, fine, ironic, exquisitely measured, balanced, attuned.

"I believe you're a blessed ghost," he accused her.

"On the contrary!"

There was a crisp, silky rustle in his direction. The odor swept in faint,

oncoming waves all over him. It broke with a little tingle on the nerves that the silence and dark seemed, gradually, to be exposing. Then a hand rested, in the instant of a bird's stay and flight on a swinging bough, against his wrist. The touch was of ivory coolness. It left a glow in its wake, however, as if electric currents had coursed slowly to the surface of her flesh and burned against his.

"Now," she questioned triumphantly, "am I real?"

"You're a woman," he apprised her ruefully.

"And now you're wondering what kind?" There was the sweetest possible amusement in her silvery tones. "Al-lons! You shall find out. I've come a long way just to see you."

"To see me!" He laughed in his turn. "Oh, you're a woman," he conceded handsomely.

"Sit down," she coaxed. "I'm going to give you ten minutes of my time now—and I assure you at this moment my time is worth the traditional king's ransom. You'll not believe it—men never know that women are most sincere when they are most extravagant. It is true that every moment that I spend with you now is worth sixty ruby drops of my heart's best blood."

"I shall believe anything. I shall believe nothing. I shall believe everything. Now are you satisfied?"

"Of course, if you'll sit down and talk with me."

"I have sat down. Now—"

"Explanations! Goose! Oh, you're a man! Why not leave it all beautifully vague and misty—stardust, moonshine, spindrift and the stuff that dreams are made of? But no—you are a man. I pity your obviosities and inevitabilities, but I'll play up to them. Listen: I have always wanted to talk with you, but there are reasons why we should not know each other. I knew you were coming here today. And I came here to meet you. Could *anything* be simpler?" There were the traditional, feminine italics in her voice.

He roared. "But if nobody knew!"

he interjected. "Not that I sha'n't hold you prisoner."

"But there *was* one that knew." She accused him. She coaxed. She wheedled.

"That's what I'm trying to remember," he confessed ruefully. "Although, of course, from the very beginning, I knew that Vance came into it in some way."

"Of course he does!" She brought it out triumphantly. "I had been waiting for months for just the right, perfect, inevitable moment. One word dropped and I managed to steal a key and here I am. But how did you connect me with Vance at first? Did you just guess?"

"Oh, your presence—your perfumes—your voice—everything about you shrieks of Vance."

"I expect they do," she said drily. "I expect they do."

"Now shall we have a light?"

"A light!" Her disgust was staccato. "Will you spoil all the wonder of it? Will you drag in the dregs of a hot, dull day? Why don't you send out for a newspaper? You'll be proposing picture post-cards or a can of beer from the corner before I know it."

"I thought of nothing stronger than tea—upon my word." He was contrite enough for her to become amiable.

"You're a humbug. You know it's gorgeous just as it is."

"I know it's enough to make a man lose his head."

"Lose it," she insisted brightly. "I'm going to lose mine and tell you things presently. You can be gloriously frank—in the dark. As if you didn't know! I've read them all—you've written such delicious things—such perilously quotable things—oh, don't be afraid; I sha'n't quote them to you—of the romances and necromances of the first meeting. But confess you never had such a first meeting as this."

"Oh, I'll admit that."

"Would you tell me a great many things?"

"Yes."

"Would you ask a great many things?"

"Yes."

She clapped her hands. Her laughter tinkled into every corner of the room. "Then the meeting is justified, isn't it?"

"I'll prove your willingness to answer the great many things," he said leisurely. "Did you perhaps do me the honor of exploring my rooms?"

There was a silence, out of which, in much apparent embarrassment, she presently groped. "Of course I did." Her tone quite took the bull by the horns. "Didn't you yourself say I was a woman? But I assure you I found nothing compromising," she ended with an archness.

There came a pause and, into it—the drip—drip—drip, irritatingly practical—of the faucet in the bathroom.

He spoke hastily. "You are dark," he said, "slender, tall."

"I am little, dumpy, blonde."

"You are full of temperament, personality, charm," he said. "You are 'instinct with,' 'alive with'—oh, you know—all those things—you know what people say—to your finger-tips."

"I am intellectual, cold, almost sterilized of emotion, atmosphere, aura."

"You are young, eager, enthusiastic," he said.

"I am old, stale and uninspired. But there was a time when I would have been all the things you so gallantly accord me—when I could have responded with every note in the scale, every color in the spectrum, if you had asked for it. But that was before a great many things."

"I suppose you mean a man?" he hazarded.

"I suppose I do."

"Is it one of the things you are going to tell me? Remember, this is a first meeting."

"Not today—although, curiously, it burns on my lips to tell you now. Oh, I'm suddenly full of my wrongs and hatreds and revenges."

"Tell me now."

"Oh, I'll tell you—I will. When he came I was—can you imagine a slim alabaster vase, full of a fiery, rose-colored liquor, so brilliant that it shone

through?—I was a woman like that. And then, he just drank me down and left me denuded, empty, vacant, pale—a forgotten, old bit of bric-à-brac that people put away in the garret. Now tell me, what do you think he deserved?"

"Death!" It came deliberately after an interval of thought. The word fell from his lips, hollow, dreadful. It seemed to echo and reecho in the hushed stillness that followed. "The people who give such wounds—" He did not finish.

"I agree," she said after a while. "Death!" She dropped the word like a bullet. It seemed to go down, down, down with a perpetual reverberation among his thoughts. "Now you'll say I'm hard."

"I'll say you're wonderful."

"Once I had a dream of him." Her voice seemed tired. "It was after a long time when I had not slept. You know how you don't sleep when all the couleur-de-rose has gone out of life?"

He felt that the small hands were making an appealing gesture to him in the dark. He replied at once, and his voice vibrated. "Oh, I know—I know."

"Do women ever make men suffer like that?" she asked in a kind of awe.

"They are singularly clever at it."

"My dream was—I saw him in an old garden. There were a great many vases there—rose-colored from what glowed from within through their alabaster sides. And I saw him go from one to another around the entire garden and drink them all up."

He made no comment.

"And now I must go. My ten minutes are more than up."

"But where and when shall we meet again?"

"Ah, we'll have to leave that to chance."

"But the chances are so few in this crowded world. It's only when you meet your brother-in-law's cousin in Tangier that the world seems small as an orange. You know how big it grows when you're hunting for somebody."

"I think you'll find me sometime."

But then you'll not care: That will be a meeting, if you like."

"I—" But, finally, he only laughed.

"Will you give me a half-hour before you move out of this room?" Her voice was liquid with entreaty.

"Yes."

"And will you stay just where you are—in the dark?"

"Yes."

"Good-bye, then." A touch like a feather fell on his hand. It left a delicate moisture there—he knew it was from her lips. Then the door shut gently.

The odor still lingered. But the presence and the voice were gone.

In the interval he thought hard, hand on brow. The clamor of his sense died down after a while. Even his nerves stilled. Presently he grew dull.

And then the drip—drip—drip from the bathroom had full possession of a room, faery a moment ago with mystery, with beauty. He began to hate the thud of its soft clamor.

The half-hour struck and passed.

He arose slowly and groped into his bedroom. He switched on the light there.

And then he turned.

A man, naked to the waist, was lying over the edge of the bed. He was on his back, but the head was doubled under the neck. Just above his heart was a splotchy, dripping red spot. A limp hand trailed in a pool of blood on the floor.

He turned the man's face up.

It came to him in the instant that he bent over and listened at his heart that it must have been only a few moments since Vance died.



## OSCAR WILDE

By Elsa Barker

**L**AUREATE of corruption, on whose brow  
The leaves of fame are frosted by the worm,  
Thou art a nightingale, whose songs affirm  
The canker in the rosebud, from a bough  
Of the dark cypress warbling. Some strange vow  
Thy spirit must have taken before birth  
To some strange god, to desecrate the earth  
With visions vile and beautiful as thou.

We loathe thee with the sure, instinctive dread  
Of young things for the graveyard and the scar.  
And though God wept when Lucifer's great star,  
With its long train, cried from the deeps blood-red,  
Still must we name thee with the second dead,  
For when the angels fall they fall so far!

# POSTHUMOUS

A STUDY IN SENTIMENTAL HESITATIONS

By James Huneker

**A**N October sun slanted its yellow glory from the western sky as Vadal entered the narrow gate of the Protestant Cemetery, which he had achieved after a dusty walk from his apartment at the top of the Spanish Stairs, by way of the Porta San Paolo. The young man was warm and craved repose; palms, pines, willows, olives, aloes and cypresses, flame-shaped, in shaded alleys, promised a pleasing haven.

This was his favorite spot. Summer afternoons, when Rome was a faded photograph of herself, he would read or sketch, sitting on the grassy mounds above the bones of the buried; Keats and Shelley touched his imagination here as nowhere else. He had become selfish about the place, and resented the appearance of strangers, odious tourists carrying red books, who talked loudly, stared condescendingly, whispered or giggled. So sensitive was he that invariably he questioned Angelo, the smiling guardian of the doorway, as to the number of foreign invaders. On this occasion Angelo held up two fingers. Vadal sighed his relief. A pair of humans he might avoid.

Up the gentle slope which leads to the tombs of Shelley and his Trelawney, Vadal passed slowly. To his annoyance he saw a man and woman before his poetic altar of the dead. The woman was on her knees. Even that quite appropriate attitude did not console him. They were intruders, both. He hurried downhill and went over to Keats. There, at least, was solitude, made more classic by the apparition of the Cestius pyramid. But

again he was disappointed, for the appealing voices of beggar boys came to him through gratings in the nearest wall. Vadal shook a threatening head at these importuners and strode away. It was one of his gloomy days, when all the poetry stored up in his bosom mingled with a spiritual spleen, made a mixture that caused him dolorous hours; he was of the receptive temperament which has no outlet for its periodical emotional crisis. He could joke about his condition afterward, calling it congestion of the poetic centres; yet he was more often bitterly chagrined when he realized his inability to relieve himself in the flaming phrases of creative verse.

Then his shoulder was touched and a contralto voice asked a pardon in English. It was the lady. She was garbed in green and carried a handful of flowers which she placed on the grave of Keats, not forgetting John Severn, who lies hard by in the ground. She knelt, and with her face in her ungloved hands, she seemed more in meditation than prayer. The fingers pressed across her eyes were thin and white, yet capable of nervous force; when she removed them and arose to rejoin her companion, Vadal saw the features of a young woman which attracted him by their purity and intense expression. He could not conceive how anyone in the twentieth century could thus sorrow after a dead poet. He loved Keats himself, revered his last resting-place, but this—this was something more personal. Perhaps, he mused, as he looked at the woman's slender figure, it is some sentimental girl who has visited Rome to stand at

the tomb of one whose name is not writ in water, but on imperishable marble. For a moment he was stirred by the image of the act and then he felt a wave of irritability mount within him.

She had reached her former position, and Vadal noted that the man was big-framed, expansive in his movements, and dressed like an Englishman abroad. He disliked him at once, instinctively. His nerves told him that he was overstrung, and he wondered whether he had made a mistake by remaining in Rome all Summer; the notion that he was suffering from malaria was more grateful to him than the conviction that it was hyperesthesia. This prompted him to walk boldly toward the couple and remove his hat. Otherwise, why should he, shy and supercilious, risk a snub from strangers? They were cordial, and the man said in a booming bass voice:

"Really, it's joyous to meet a countryman in this lonely cemetery. I was telling Mrs. Saint-Hilary—"

"But, Lewis, how do you know the gentleman is English?" interposed the lady.

Vadal made a nervous gesture of dissent.

"I am not English, though I speak your language, adore your poets."

She glanced her gratitude, and would have spoken but for the jarring laughter of her husband.

"After this," he effusively exclaimed, "I'll never go by clothes. You have an English tailor, at all events."

Vadal bowed, annoyed, yet without the acrid feeling he had smothered a few moments before, so sudden were the revulsions of his moods. Bearded, imposing of girth, with the head of a fighter, of a master of enterprises, Saint-Hilary made an immediate impression. Either one liked him or got out of his path—he was given to elbowing his way through the crowds of life, and the young man realized the force and animal attractiveness of his new acquaintance. He did not, however, offer further explanation of his English speech. He was engaged in analyzing

with increasing interest the charm of Mrs. Saint-Hilary.

She seemed one of those rare women whose air is captivating in its magic innocence. He set her down as a poet, or—then he remembered in a flash. Of course, she was the wife of the robust correspondent of a prominent English journal. He smiled.

"I think we ought to know each other," he amiably ventured. "There is at least one drawing-room in Rome where we may meet some day."

The girl clasped her hands, crying:

"I knew it. The Bernervilles! And you are M. Jan Vadal, the young Dutch gentleman who reads poetry on the tombs of Keats and Shelley. What did I say, Lewis, what did I say?"

She was all enthusiasm, and the perplexity of Vadal increased as he recalled her earlier elegiac expression. Her husband took him by the hand.

"I liked you from the first. Old Bernerville told me all about you. You are very solid over there." He nodded in the direction of Rome.

"Yes, I read here, sometimes sketch, oftener dream my afternoons away. In fine, I'm a *dilettante*, and that's why I love Rome—all of all cities it is the one where one can be laziest with most dignity."

They talked of their friends, of their preferences in art, of their beloved poets. Saint-Hilary proposed departure.

"We live up in the Ludovisi quarter, in the Via Sallustiana, and darkness soon comes these Autumn days. Let us walk as far as the Porta San Paolo and get a carriage."

"And I am at the Trinità dé Monti."

"Our neighbor, practically," said the other. "Come, we must be going. Dottie."

Vadal was resentful. Dottie! What a name! How little suited to her spiritual personality was her good-natured, tiresome husband, he pondered. In the carriage, facing Mrs. Saint-Hilary on the drive homeward, he studied her face. Her luminous eyes reflected the slaty gray-greens of the sky. For Vadal she was a violin that

vibrated, yet had never sounded the eternal music.

## II

WHEN a young man wishes to profound the enigma of a strange woman, to evoke from her submerged music, he is apt to push his curiosity beyond its province, his virtuosity beyond its powers. Vadal remembered this as he walked slowly along the Via Sistina. The night was chilly, one of those damp, irritating evenings in which a cheerless Autumn sounds the *leit-motif* of rapidly approaching Winter. He did not feel in a rebounding humor; if he could have avoided visiting the Bernervilles at that precise moment he would have been almost content. He knew that the Saint-Hilarys were to be there. Mrs. Bernerville had written him a brief, breathless note full of underscored adjectives and enthusiastic gasps. Oh, what an impression he had made on her dear friends! Mrs. Saint-Hilary had not minced matters: Vadal, she said, looked like a poet; while her husband, dear, old, bluff Saint-Hilary—a rough diamond, and a man of importance in the literary world—he, too, had liked Vadal; a good fellow, he called him, very unlike the average minor poet.

Vadal sniffed. She was impossibly delightful, *cette dame!* Why had he ever shown her his poetry? He reddened at the ascription—minor poet. Never major. What impertinence! What a patronizing tone! He regretted his promise. He loathed strange people. Success in life for him meant escaping new faces. Even the memory of Mrs. Saint-Hilary's face, vaguely silhouetted in the twilight, did not touch him now. Her mystery evaporated in the flabby phrases of Mrs. Bernerville. Besides, the Bernervilles were too rich; the possession of so much money was gross. He had reached the Piazza Barbarini with its rococo Bernini Tritons. Soon he was shaking hands with his hostess in the Palazzo, wondering why he had come.

"It's good to see you," were her welcoming words. "I've asked no one but the Saint-Hilarys. Mr. Bernerville expects his pirate friend, as he calls him, the Prince Abbazia"—(that stupid bore! thought her listener)—"but let us go to the fire. What disagreeable Fall nights we get! I recall Rome when its Octobers were like the Mays of Florence."

Mrs. Bernerville was in the fading fifties, small, alert, her face like a wizened pear. She said she was from Boston; but in moments of mockery her husband would mention the name of a small Western town as her birthplace. This statement she always received in placid humor; her temper was admirable under the severest strain. Dressed in black lace, wearing a collar of black pearls, she appeared to Vadal as a highly evolved beetle, an aristocratic beetle, with the characteristic nervous celerity of one—she would circle about a room, about her husband or a victim, with an accompanying loquacity that compelled rather than attracted.

The salon was empty, save for the pair. Sitting opposite the fireplace the young man lost some of his irritability as he listened to her budget of gossip about people they knew. He longed to ask a few questions concerning the Saint-Hilarys. Who was the wife? Had they been married many years? But his companion pursued a zigzag monologue in which she exposed, with touching candor, the troubles of Count O'Ragan and his pretty spouse. She had her theory as to this unfortunate squabble—it was not all the gambling tastes of the count. Oh, no! If she dared—why, yes, certainly the Saint-Hilarys were happy. Whoever doubted it? Dottie is Irish, her husband—need one ask?—English. He is a tramp; his wife is a bit of a humbug.

Dottie a humbug! Familiarity, for Vadal, bred a frost.

"And," continued Mrs. Bernerville, "she is a poet, like yourself."

He raised deprecating hands.

"Dear lady, I am no poet—only a dreamer. Pray do not say any more of

my poems to strangers. I fear Mrs. Saint-Hilary will find me a sad disappointment after all the praise you heaped on my ineffectual head."

"Praise? I? I really told her you were an inarticulate Milton, who some day would—if you fell in love—overwhelm us with your genius. But don't fall in love with our Dottie—it will be a waste of your time. Oh, there you are, Bernerville."

Vadal greeted the elderly man, glad because of the interruption. The Miltonic touch had put his politeness to a sad test. Oh, for a vast wilderness from which the tactless would be forever barred!

"How are you feeling, Vadal? Why don't you come oftener? If I'm not in, there's Madame, who can discourse Shakespeare and the musical glasses. And I have some burgundy. What you miss!"

The short, apoplectic Bernerville, with his Eastern eyes, brilliant, malicious, his fierce, wheedling red lips and old-fashioned flowing side-whiskers, looked more like an Austrian banker than an American who had lived in Italy thirty years.

"Oh, let's talk of music," his wife broke in impatiently. "We were discussing Sgambati and Liszt." Vadal resignedly closed his eyes. He was accustomed to these foreshortenings of the truth. She would talk of Sgambati, with whom she had studied ten years earlier, and of Liszt and the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein before the close of the evening. It was one of the young man's particular tortures to hear from her rapidly moving lips the reason why Cardinal Antonelli interfered in Liszt's projected marriage. He had been told and retold that anecdote a hundred times.

"I say, where are our guests? It's nearly ten o'clock. No Saint-Hilary, no Mrs. Saint-Hilary the passionate pilgrim, no Abbazia? I wonder where that old pirate is?"

Bernerville held his watch in his pudgy white hand, and smiled wickedly. His friends boasted that he could shatter a reputation with a gleam of his

shining teeth. The sound of a door opening and closing, and footsteps back of them—it must be the Saint-Hilarys.

They had entered unannounced, the lady on gliding feet, Saint-Hilary following with his amiable shuffle. Mrs. Saint-Hilary did not seem very cordial, while her husband with his air of false *bonhomie* was intolerable to Vadal. So, these people, who had been so desirable and charming the other day, were at close range average folk. With his pessimistic imagination he immediately saw everything drab. She had not removed her wraps in the ante-room, she was a privileged person; there was a touch of fur on her shoulders and the round astrakhan hat on her shapely head gave her an exotic touch. A Russian princess, fresh from the Neva, a driver of sledge and reindeers! Vadal saw the light from the blazing logs reverberate in her deep gray eyes. Then she went to Mrs. Bernerville's apartment. And he wondered why such a trivial thing as the reflection of fire in a woman's eyes, sweet-cupped and dark-lashed, should so trouble his soul.

"Come into the den and have something before you begin to drink tea," growled Bernerville to the two men.

"I will that," was the quick reply of Saint-Hilary. Vadal shook his head. He preferred staring at the flames, hoping that they might evoke her glance. As the ladies returned the expected prince arrived. He bowed stiffly and looked in the direction of the smoking-room. Mrs. Bernerville laughed.

"Oh, we will excuse you, Abbazia. They're in there."

"I'm thirsty," he curtly replied, and disappeared.

"Bernerville has odd cronies, hasn't he?" said his wife. "Vadal, you've been coming to this house more than ten years. Tell me, have you ever seen an intimate of my husband's you could talk with over a minute?"

"Frankly, no."

"Have you written much?" inquired Mrs. Saint-Hilary in her modulated tones. He forgave her the brusqueness of her salutation. All his early

interest revived at one swift leap. Egoism! But it was her voice that held him. It seemed as tender as the green on leaves newly put forth. Then he started and apologized for his rambling wits.

"You are a poet," she gaily asserted; "what image held your tongue in check then? Come, give us the fresh mintage of your brain." Her husband away she fairly warmed. Oh, the Celt in her eyes, and their melancholy setting!

The young man stammered. His conceit deserted him. Some inward necessity bade him keep silent, though he longed to respond in lyric phrase. But he did what many poets have done before him—he drank his tea hot and held his peace. Not only did he feel like a fool, he knew that he acted like one. The two women chatted of their work. Mrs. Bernerville politely asked if Mr. Saint-Hilary would soon finish his book on *Celtic Antiquities*.

"He is a desperately lazy man, my husband, notwithstanding his bigness. He seems to think he has labored like a galley slave when he has finished his daily stint for the newspaper. Aren't men naturally slothful, M. Vadal?"

"I am—if I may reason from the particular to the general."

"Yes, but you're a poet."

"I am not. I love poetry. I try to write it—I—I—"

"You know what dear Mrs. Bernerville says of you?"

"That I'm an inarticulate—?" He flushed with anger.

"I don't believe it. You will write when the time comes. Some generous person should stir you."

"Ah, but where *is* she?" Vadal's tone was so peculiar that the two women rallied him. Mrs. Bernerville exclaimed vivaciously:

"If you are going to talk your tiresome esthetics, I'll go see my men. Blue-stockings are a bore." She scampered away.

The silence endured several minutes. Mrs. Saint-Hilary went to the fire. Her face was flushed, her eyes dark—he thought he detected a certain fatigue in them; the face with its decided, irreg-

ular profile, was without distinction at this moment. Perhaps she was not as happy as her friends believed.

"I think I recognize in you, M. Vadal, a trait of our time. Every generation produces its share of souls born disillusionized. All sorts of ingenious and silly theories are put forth to explain these souls. Some call them decadent."

"Poor, overworked word," he hazarded.

"True, but handy for the phrase-makers."

"Candidly, I'm healthy enough," he interrupted. "And if I've published nothing, that is no reason why you should suspect me as a pessimist."

"You are not a pessimist," she gravely said—though her eyes smiled—"you should be summed up as a half Hamlet—one who dares not, but may."

He was flattered and wondered with the usual fatuity of youth why she took so much interest in his case. She read his mood. With a burst of gaiety:

"Now don't let us become morbid discussing your hidden ambitions. I know your kind—"

"Saint-Hilary?"

"Good heavens! He's a steam engine, not a man. And what a gift of expression." She paused, and lightly adjusting with her slim fingers an ornament in her hair she moved rapidly around the dimly lighted room. He followed her with his eyes, his envy of her husband revived by her warm words of praise. Yet she had called him lazy a few minutes before! Logic from such a temperament!

"You are very Celtic," he declared, "very! You ascribe to me a Hamlet-like quality—half Hamlet, I think you remarked ironically; but I am observer enough to ask you whether among your own sex there are not half Hamlets, quarter Hamlets? You have known so many among mine." She smiled.

"There speaks the wounded vanity of the man, of the poet. You remember what Heinrich Heine said about man being the vainest animal, and the poet the vainest among men!"

"Yes, but you haven't answered my

question. Are you, too, a half Hamlet?"

"'Alas, to be a woman and a nomad's heart in me!"' she quoted. "Do you know who said that? Dora Sigerson, loveliest of new Irish writers. I, a feminine half Hamlet! Never! I'm a nomad. I love to wander. I hate the stuffy life of my sex—the indoor sex, I have named it. Oh, if I had been born a man—a man! The history of heroes is the history of youth. That's Disraeli."

"What would you do if you were a hero?" he eagerly questioned. "Make love to pretty women, like all of them?"

"*Pouf!* is that man's only ideal? No, I would write great poems." Her voice, often muffled in timbre, rang out.

"Where is the nomad, you spoke of a moment ago? To be a poet means chaining one's spirit to the inkwell."

"To live my poems, of course." She was almost pettish. Then the door opened and with a gust of laughter Saint-Hilary entered, followed by the others. His face was red and his enormous frame swayed slightly. Evidently Bernerville had something stronger than old burgundy.

"Ah! there you are again, Vadal." ("He sees two of me," muttered Vadal.) "And entertaining Mrs. Saint-Hilary. I suppose you exchanged verses. Oh, but she is a poet, you know. Now Dottie, put on your singing robes and say something nice in your sweet Irish voice. Recite one of your own poems."

Mrs. Saint-Hilary looked at him coldly and did not reply. The giant went to her, sliding across the polished floor, and laughingly took her by the wrists. Everyone was amused at his persistence, except Vadal.

Presently the party broke up. Saint-Hilary, his exhilaration slain by his wife's disagreeable countenance, bade the Bernervilles a glum good night, and the prince was helped downstairs by the servants; Mrs. Bernerville whispered that it was his regular evening performance. Bernerville, suave and mysterious, was as fresh as Vadal.

The young man slipped away. What people! What a misspent night! And Mrs. Bernerville had not failed to drop a last depreciating word about Dorothea. He walked home slowly by the familiar route. In his chambers he found a fire, his dressing-gown, with a supply of tobacco, and a decanter arranged by his careful man.

"Now," he ejaculated, "is the time to enjoy oneself."

He made himself comfortable and getting pen and paper he began to take the inventory of his platonic soul, a practice he never omitted before retiring. Many ideas crossed his mind. She had said some memorable things. And why did she manifest such interest? And the husband. Happy with such a man—*jamais, jamais*.

He looked behind him into the shadows. Despite his agnosticism, he always experienced what he called a "mystic fear" when alone. What joy to have, in the reaches of the gloomy night, when the vitality is lowered and the hobgoblins of conscience are about, the image of a sympathetic companion. Decidedly some men don't deserve their happiness. And, resolutely, he began to rewrite the eleventh line of a sonnet in English.

### III

EARLY the third morning Vadal went out; he had not stirred from his rooms since he returned from the Bernervilles. Invitations were unheeded. The success of his sonnet—he finished the four remaining lines before he retired—gave his muse a boost. In two evenings he had actually written three sonnets, the workmanship of which was not indifferent; already buzzed in his head the scheme of a sonnet-sequence. But the sharp glorious blue of the sky that saluted him this day drove rhyming from his thoughts. Swallowing his chocolate he was soon striding through a leafy avenue of the Pincian garden and wondering whether life was not, after all, worth while. The sweep of the picture, Rome be-

neath him like the misty dream of some Oriental poet, spurred his nerves from their languor. He traversed the outer path of the garden as far as the Piazza del Popolo, and was hesitating, when a hand was placed on his arm.

"Good morning, Sir Poet."

"Mrs. Saint-Hilary! What luck! Only a moment ago I was thinking of you."

"What a fib! Your eye is too clear for a man who has been indulging in retrospection. No, no, you thought what a wonderful morning it is. You said to yourself you were glad to be alive."

"You read my mind like a gipsy—like the gipsy you are!"

"I feel like a gipsy this morning. And you?"

"Not like a half Hamlet."

"Ah! that phrase sticks."

"It does not fit. I'm for action. Let's walk over Rome."

"*Merci!* I have a breakfast engagement with Mr. Saint-Hilary."

Vadal looked so displeased that she smiled, one of her half-pitying smiles. He winced. He felt that he was a mild mark for her wit. What did she think of him? And to show jealousy like a raw boy out of school. He stiffened his spine. The crisp sunshine painted her a most desirable picture.

"If we are to be friends," she suggested soberly, "let us not mind the pebbles in our shoes. Because *you* feel like a freed balloon today you fancy that the whole cityful must rejoice with your joy. How like a poet! Suppose that I told you I came out here to be alone, so utterly miserable am I, what would you say?"

"That I don't believe it, my dear Mrs. Saint-Hilary; I ask your pardon for my selfishness. I feel well this morning, and man-like I wish you to feel the same."

Then he gazed at her in tremulous anticipation. What had operated upon his spirits to disengage such emotions? Compared to this moment his previous life had been a mere slumber. To his scrutiny she was more buoyant than the night at the Bernervilles; he

endeavored to grasp the secret of her fleeting expression. But her eyes were the guardians of mute treasures; they had no message for him. He suppressed his eagerness and would not be cajoled into self-betrayal.

They walked slowly in the direction of the Villa Medici. They did not enter; instead, turned into a road that follows the curves of the bridle-path and if they did not speak, their brains were busy building. So little had happened to Vadal, so little of value, that he could not help pondering the possibilities of his companion's career. There was she walking, almost touching him, and he knew no more about her soul than if she hailed from a neighboring planet. He had grown to distrust his first impression that women were easy to read, were more instinctive than men, and therefore wore their hearts exposed.

Humility itself in the presence of his new friend, he asked himself whether he could seal his lips so effectually that she might in vain try for his secret. He firmly believed it to be a secret! Suddenly he spoke:

"Let us talk of your Celtic poets. I was born at The Hague, but I read English from my boyhood, so these new poets confuse me, Dutchman that I am."

She turned moist eyes toward him. She moved his heart like the sound of flutes.

"Ireland is all my life. When I'm there I'm unhappy. That's because I'm Irish. But when I'm away I'm unhappy. And that, too, is Irish."

Everything about her seemed to live; the flowers in her hair were faded in comparison with the sparkle of her flower-like eyes. Her smile was as tricksy as the new moon seen through flying cloud-scud.

Vadal was delighted. He had come out with an unusual fund of good humor and here was he expending it upon the moods of his companion. He hardly thought of himself; truly a novel and refreshing experience. She was conscious that she puzzled him, for she stopped, and in her cheerful, every-day voice she commanded:

"About face! March!" His heart beat heavily; though it was midday and the sun blazing hot for October, the air seemed cooler. Obeying, he with difficulty kept time with her impetuous steps. They soon passed out before the Trinità and he begged permission to accompany her as far as the Palazzo Margherita. She shook a negative. Then at least to the Piazza Barbarini. No! she would leave him at the church. He looked so earnestly at her that she colored. Nothing was said about a future engagement. He was doleful.

"Ah! half Hamlet!" she teasingly protested. And she walked quickly along the Via Sistina.

"Celt!" cried Vadal, as he watched her graceful, swaying figure. He then went indoors, drank tea and smoked his pipe until dinner-time. Oh, if he only had courage at the moment when most needed! To be a thunderbolt in action—that was his unrealized ambition. But a half Hamlet—!

#### IV

THAT night he saw at the Teatro Costanzi a play by d'Annunzio, a violent tragedy, related in the golden voice of the poet, but not akin to Vadal's mood; he wished himself out of this huge theatre, sonorous with applause. He went away before the culminating act, and slowly walked the streets. The moon had driven the stars away and swung, a silver-white pyx in the firmament; there was cloud-shine on the fleecy boulders that nimblly accompanied it in the blue.

This sky incited Vadal to vague heroisms; yet he was more curious about the look of Rome in the moonshine—so ingrained his romantic vision. It was not long before he turned off the Corso. The Piazza di Spagna was deserted; not even a carriage disturbed its emptiness. The moon transposed the trees of the Pincio into ebon music, and the Spanish Stairs were streaked with shining bars of light. As he neared the top, he discerned the figure of a

closely hooded woman, who ran recklessly down the steps. If she had not recoiled as she passed him he would not have paused to look at her.

"Mrs. Saint-Hilary!" She went on, taking two steps at a time. So swift was her flight that he instinctively gazed above for her pursuer. He saw none. Then he followed. But the encounter had unnerved her. She paused at the bottom. He could not distinguish her features. He took her hand and found it icy.

"Dear, dear lady, what can trouble you so? Are you ill?" She did not reply; he could feel her all a-tremble. "Let me take you home. You are frightened. I'll ask no questions. It is not well for you to be out alone at this hour. It is nearly midnight." He attempted to lead her up the steps. She snatched her hand from his.

"No, no, not that way. Good God—not home!"

He was appalled by the extravagant misery of her tone. Here was the last act of the drama he had not sat out; and one infinitely more poignant than the fiction of the Italian poet. Without artifice was the soul of the woman bared to him. He was numb with the horror of his imaginings. What else could have driven this gentle creature out upon the lonely streets in a strange city—what else but—! He ground his teeth in rage. His phlegmatic temperament dissolved in the fire of her sorrow. Like a flash it came upon him. He loved her. He had always loved her. And she had been driven from her husband by some nameless outrage at his hands. Brute! Vadal uttered a hoarse cry and gripped her arm.

"Come," he whispered, "come. I'll not trouble you with a single question. I understand all. Come with me—up the stairs. There is refuge for you at the hotel from insult. Oh, I'll not worry you with my company!" She regarded him with blank eyes—he could only catch their intermittent glint. Her voice, when she spoke, was toneless.

"I'll go with you—but you must

take me home, to my home in the Ludovisi quarter. You've brought me to my senses. Don't, dear friend, set me down as a madwoman. I was crazy. There was provocation. It's past. I'll go back. Forget all about this when we part." And she seemed to steer away from the edge of tears to the deeps of mockery.

When we part! He felt moonstruck, his personality evaporating. This was their farewell, the end of their brief romance. She would go back to that man whom she loved, despite his brutality. But the reason for this love! Whistle down the wind for the answer. He brought her to the door of her hotel and left her without a word. Twice she had sent him from her, once playfully, now in—sorrow? Celtic she was; she had the cruel heart of the Celt . . . but was the music in her worth the hearing?

## V

His ill-luck pursued him to Venice. When it rains in Rome there are the palaces, the picture galleries, the churches; but at Venice, the meeting of the waters proves doubly monotonous to humanity. The wet of the streets enters the soul. The drippings of the sky are like the eternal tears of the gods. In the great ducal palace somber dampness dowers the immemorial portraits with humid eyes. Along the canals the wind howls as it transfixes the wayfarer with lance-like thrusts of liquid.

Vadal execrated his life when he stepped into the hotel gondola at the station, and sat shivering as he was propelled through the desolating darkness of narrow water alleys where murder and misery might lurk under every mean, flickering gas-jet. The melancholy challenge of his gondolier failed to evoke visions of delicious nocturnal Venice. He was glad to gain the hotel steps. Everyone was congealed by the cold, everything saturated with the rain. He did not remain long in his apartment. Without,

the storm-drums of the Adriatic were ruffling, though the shape of the gale was lost in the wrack of spilt mist.

At Bauer-Grünwald's it was cheerful, the most cheerful café on the lagoons. Crowded with Germans drinking, eating, talking, smoking, the picture, not without a hint of Teniers, appealed to him because of its human quality. Nevertheless he felt homesick for Rome; homesick for the hospitable, if tiresome Bernervilles—the madame with her teasing chatter, the master with his malice. Sick, too, but in another fashion, for the sight of a woman's face—

"What an ass I am! Very well, *garçon*, I'll sit at this table. Give me the wine-card first."

Vadal had not quitted Rome immediately after that night. But he avoided his friends. He wished to hear no gossip. He could surmise, without being baldly told, that unhappiness camped in the household of the Saint-Hilarys. After a week the city became intolerable and he fled to Venice—where it rained, where it would rain forever. He ordered some cold meat, a salad and a bottle of Bordeaux. Then, relieved of the head-waiter's presence, he looked about him. Yes, the Germans were practical; bad weather never daunted them. And, with this commonplace, his roving eye took in a man who sat smiling opposite him. He clutched his knees affrightedly. Was he dreaming? No, this vision was too real, too burly, too much in the flesh. Saint-Hilary came over, his big fist extended.

"You here? What luck! I thought I'd have to put in an interminable evening drinking Pilsener and talking to the waiters—who, German as they are, are better than the natives." Vadal endeavored not to see the hand offered him, but he felt it, as it squeezed with unaffected vigor his own small fingers. He loathed this monster. He had been expending his nervous energy for a week damning him, and here he was—but why in Venice? And alone. More ill-luck.

"I've been drinking a lot for the past

ten days," admitted Saint-Hilary in a husky voice; "you won't mind, will you? You're a good chap, though hard to make out. I'm in a heap of trouble. Let me bother you. I'm alone. Here—waiter! Fetch my glass to this gentleman's table. Hurry up!" The order was given with characteristic energy as he dropped into a chair beside Vadal, bidding him go ahead and eat his supper. "I'll be all right, soon."

Sick at heart, the poet swallowed his food, sawdust to his taste. After some wine he plucked up wit enough to ask Saint-Hilary what he was doing away from Rome.

"Doing? I'll just tell you, my boy. I'm up here looking for Mrs. Saint-Hilary, for my wife. What are you doing, may I ask?" This question, though put without an insinuation of ill-temper, turned Vadal pale.

"Why, Mr. Saint-Hilary, I only arrived an hour ago on the morning train from Rome," he stuttered.

"I know it, my boy, I know it. You're all right. You're a little soft on Dottie, but I'm not blaming you for her flight. She disappeared the morning after you brought her back from the Spanish Steps."

"She told you?" Vadal struggled not to appear embarrassed.

"Yes, and told me, too, what a trump you were. You behaved like a gentleman. And I acted like a brute. Don't scold me. I am a brute. When I accused her of taking too much interest in you—say, man, don't get up so suddenly, my nerves are taut from brandy! I meant no offense—why, she turned on me like a tigress. Oh, she has a nice temper. She is poetic, such a talent. I honestly think, however, that she has used you for 'copy.' Vadal, sit down! You won't go away and leave me. Yes, I promise to say no more about the affair. I am to blame—entirely. No, I am not jealous of you.

"I simply couldn't let the brandy alone—do you see this book? Have you read it?" He handed the pale, irritated young man a little volume,

bound in green and gold. Vadal knew it.

"Yes," he answered, "I read '*Méryon*' coming up in the train. It's exquisite both in verse and prose. Who wrote it? Who is this Rose Micaela? Does she belong to the group of Irish writers of whom Mrs. Saint-Hilary is so fond?" He was only too glad to lead the conversation away from the man's domestic affairs. But his heart was a lump of brass in his bosom. As he drank his sour wine he longed to hear news of her, to learn the cause of the trouble. And where had she gone?

"You'll never know from me who Rose Micaela is," replied Saint-Hilary. His expansive mood had vanished. He read in a halting manner paragraphs from the book, paragraphs full of rich meanings, richer prose. Nervous as he was, he exposed in a trained voice the densely woven patterns of this new prose, with its undertones of Celtic sorrow, its veiled passion, its rhythmic pathos, and its wild call from the heart of Erin. "*Méryon*!" The title was an evocation. And surely no man could have written the book.

"Yes, my boy, that's great art, great soul. Do you know," he whispered confidentially, "they have placed the authorship on my shoulders. Even Dottie—Mrs. Saint-Hilary, has asked me the question. I, the good, old newspaper hack. Have a drink?" He paused.

Vadal paid his score and arose.

"Not going? Listen to the rain on that roof. Stay a bit. I return to Rome early in the morning. I think I'll find Dottie at home. Lord, what a face you pull! Well, good night to you. I'm glad I met you. If you ever publish your poetry send me a copy. I'll review it. Where are you stopping?"

Vadal hurried away. He would have struck the man in another minute—at least, that is what he said to himself as he went over the bridge across the Campo St. Moisé into the hotel. But he could not sleep all night. . . .

He found a penciled card the next morning. It was from Saint-Hilary.

It told him that the writer hoped to see him soon in Rome. No more. Vadal tore it up into minute pieces and went out for coffee. It still rained ferociously.

"I'll go to Milan tonight," he said. "At least I can hear Duse there. Here!" He asked for a railway guide and marked down his train. It would leave in the afternoon.

He breasted the wind shrieking through the Piazzetta and stumbled along the Riva degli Schiavoni. He could hardly see Santa Maria della Salute for the gray rain, which came across the lagoon obliquely, titillating the shallow waters into foam. The Guidecca was a nebulous patch. And the sharp salty odors that were abroad in the air set him dreaming of mid-ocean. Turning off the unprotected Riva he walked at hazard arriving on the Rio della Picta; there he found the church of San Giorgio degli Schiavoni and entered, more for protection than any pious reason.

In front of Carpaccio's Saint George and the Dragon he saw her. At once the poorly lighted church was flooded as if by one of Turner's golden sunbursts. Forgotten the wet without, forgotten Venice, forgotten Saint-Hilary with his odious confidences. She stood there, in devotional attitude before the masterpiece. He expected to see her kneel in prayer as she knelt the first day he met her in the cemetery. Then the lame cicerone, who sews when he is not explaining the pictures to tourists, Ruskin in their bewildered fingers, spoke to him. Would the *Signor Inglese* care to look?

He was silenced by Vadal's threatening face. But it was too late to retreat; attracted by the voices she turned. He could have called her Blessed, as she crossed to him in an unconcerned manner, and shook his trembling hand. She had saved him a wilderness of explanations.

"Suppose we go to the hotel," she remarked in her usual cool tones. The rain twisted their umbrellas and beat into their faces, so that exchange of words was unpleasant. An

idea overtook him. When they passed the gondolas at the Piazzetta he cried in her ear:

"The Giardino Reale. Let's go."

In a few minutes two bare-legged men were fighting wind and water as they slowly paddled inch by inch their craft through the toppling seas. It was a foolish excursion; the little steamer would have carried them more safely; but they could not have sat so intimately as in the gondola. Drenched but happy, they entered the picture gallery and stopped to breathe; they soon found a café where they ordered something to eat and drink. Vadal did not attempt to ask questions. Her grateful eyes rewarded him; but the events of the past few hours were telling on his nerves, on his imagination. He felt bolder than in Rome. The woman he adored was before him, apparently contented in his company. And how lovely she looked. The dampness had set burning her rich Irish complexion. Her gray eyes, enlarged by sorrow, seemed contented when they met his. Her mouth had a subtle smile in its curves; she was more radiant than he had ever seen her at Rome. Emboldened by the excellent Chianti he explained:

"I'm so happy, Dorothea." She opened wider her eyes. He put his hand on hers. "I'm so happy. Oh, to be in Venice! And with you. I—I—"

"M. Vadal, had we better not go back to the hotel?" He hesitated. And the man who hesitates is sometimes saved.

"I hope you'll pardon my crazy tongue. I'm only telling you the truth. How I have suffered since the night I met you—"

"But you are too nervous to talk. You have not said anything, any truth—and you must not. Be my friend. I am alone. A lonely woman is always in the wrong. M. Vadal, here is your waiter. Pay him and let us go." Despairingly he settled. They went into the gale and this time walked, crossing slippery marble bridges, deserted quays and to the howling tune of the wind. When they came,

at last, to the "Danieli" she bowed her head and went in. This was too much for the young man. He followed, and in the salon called to her. He felt himself wilting under her piercing gaze. But he would not be silenced.

"Listen to me—Mrs. Saint-Hilary. I may be the victim of an artistic experiment, yet in Rome when you were with—with your husband I held my tongue. But this is Venice and I refuse to be tortured any longer.

"Last night I saw him," Vadal persisted, "saw Saint-Hilary—"

She started. She blushed hotly.

"Last night—here?"

"Here. He told me all," he continued defiantly, though he knew that he was melodramatic. "He told me all. I know who wrote 'Méryon,' that beautiful work. Oh, Dorothea, you, an artist, poet, how can you stand your life?"

"He told you I wrote 'Méryon'?"

"No, not exactly," he whispered. "He said that he had been credited with the book."

"He is the author. Do you hear, Vadal, my husband is the author of all the books signed by Rose Micaela." She glittered in her wrath.

"I don't believe it—I don't believe it."

"You must!" Then her humor changed. "Now sit down and be a good boy. Let us think the thing out." Bewildered he followed her movements. She paced the room a few minutes. He could hear his heart thump.

"I'll go back to Rome with you," she gravely announced, her eyes narrowed to slits, her voice filled to a provocative murmur. Joyfully he sprang toward her—at last the violin had vibrated!

"No, no—not yet!" The silky smile of her set him crazy.

"Do you return to your hotel. Come for me in an hour. I'll be ready."

Dismissed he rushed to his room, packed his handbag, settled his account, and before the sixty minutes had passed he was back. The *portier* looked at him solemnly. The lady had gone away a half-hour ago!

"Gone! Why I had an engagement with her."

"A big gentleman called a few minutes after you left," replied the man soothingly and holding out his hand.

"Her husband!" exclaimed Vadal, in a sort of chilly rage, yet determined to wear a brave face.

"Oh, yes, her husband—thank you, Signor—"

With women the unexpected always rules, he ruminated; when they pipe, men must dance; and he had believed the contrary. Life was very different from books. As the train traversed the interminable bridge, he looked back at Venice, storm begirt, sea and sky in watery embrace, and his throat choking, he essayed to hum: "'Oh, to be a woman and a nomad's heart in me!'"

But he was only a tragic sentimentalist, and soon his eyes were wet as Venice.

## VI

WHAT had he done, what had he said? he often asked himself. He had loved a woman, a genius, neglected by a coarse husband, one who smirkingly had taken upon himself the honors due his wife. And Vadal had not been allowed to tell her of his sincere love; under the lash of her husband's revelations, and of the wine and the weather, he had whimpered something, and she had left him. Had she not, throughout their brief acquaintance, always sent him away from her? Oh, what an ass! The woman had never ceased loving her husband—not even when ill-treated. And he fancied that he understood women. Oh, what a dolt! And to seek her love in such a hurried style!—like a train that must be overtaken!

One day, at his house in Holland, he read of the sudden death by apoplexy of Lewis Saint-Hilary, the noted writer. And for weeks afterward the chronicles were full of the doings of this worthy who, in addition to having been a journalist of power, proved to be the unsuspected author of "Méryon," that

prose epic of old Erin, the first impulse of the Neo-Celtic renascence. Vadal rubbed his eyes and returned to Rome.

There he did not find the Berner-ville. They had gone to Egypt, taking with them Prince Abbazia, whose health was far from robust—the sympathetic *cameriere* added that burgundy and brandy were poor aids to a long life. Madame Saint-Hilary? Ah! he threw out his thin hands, palms upward, she never came now to the Palazzo Barbarini. She is the widow of a distinguished poet—*addio, Signor, addio*.

Another October sun slanted its yellow glory from the western sky as Vadal entered the narrow gate of the Protestant cemetery, which still wore its air of delicate desolation. One year earlier he had there encountered his fate, the first woman, he was assured, who had understood him. His step was heavy as he went up the slope where lay the remains of his poet. Was it a trick of memory, or hallucination, that pictured for him a kneeling figure at the grave of Shelley! Increasing his pace he sprang up the incline. She did not turn as he came to the tomb. It was the widow of Lewis Saint-Hilary, garbed in green, and so immersed was she in her meditations that he feared to disturb her. For five minutes he kept silence; then his uneasy temperament mastered his tongue—besides the color of her hair worried him. It had formerly been black; it was now a Botticellian blonde. This change made him curious.

"Dorothea!" he softly called, "Dorothea!" She did not move.

"Do you know who is speaking—

Mrs. Saint-Hilary?" he continued, his courage oozing through the very cadences of his voice.

"Yes—I know."

"Won't you see me again?" This imploringly.

"No," she sternly replied.

"Is this—is this all?"

"All." Venice, rainy, charmless and cold, was compressed in her tone.

Stung to the centre of his dearest vanity by the ironic inflection, he left her for the last time. For him she was a cracked fiddle. She was married to the memory of her dead; a spiritual *suicide*. With a final gesture he bade his hopes take flight. It was the first brave act of his irresolute life. As he passed through the portal of the cemetery he walked like a man who had escaped the burden of corroding hopes.

Every year the literary world is startled by a posthumous work of the late fecund and brilliant Lewis Saint-Hilary; his widow has proved an admirable editor of the deceased man's manuscripts. Epical and pathetic, saturated with patriotism and poesy, his books, in verse and prose, are the cornerstone of a new and highly imaginative literature.

Jan Vadal has not written sonnets since he deserted Rome for The Hague; even for the inestimable gift of genius one may pay too high a price. Nevertheless he believes that some day his art will master his emotional reticence. If—he often thinks—Dorothea Saint-Hilary had but realized the golden opportunity she lost when she refused to transform this half Hamlet into a singing poet, perhaps . . .



### THEIR UTILITY

"THE slums of our great cities—" didactically began Professor Twiggs, the schoolmaster.

"They have their uses," grimly interjected old Timrod Totten. "Without them many of our most prominent preachers would never have been heard of."

## A SHRINE INVADED

By Harriet Gaylord

**S**LIVERS TAYLOR was an unwilling convalescent after his bad attack of fever. When their noonday meal was finished he shamefacedly watched his camp companions slouch or stride or trot on their way back to the Lone Johnny Mine. Then he rose slowly to his lanky, emaciated height, gripped his stout stick, and moved with wobbly indirection out into the sunshine. Everywhere gray hills and blistering heat! Two stubby, dwarfed, tired-looking pines beckoned him eagerly from their perch high on the rocky roof of a cave. He tottered along in that direction only to collapse suddenly on the ground a few yards short of the promised land, with nothing between him and the fierce rays of the sun except a clump of dead-gray sage-brush and a battered old felt sombrero.

For half an hour he lay there, limp, white, unconscious; then feeling and ambition returned. Slowly he drew himself up to a sitting posture and faced those beckoning trees. Somehow, to-day, stunted, brown-green apologies though they were, they suggested home and friends and wife and child and happiness back in God's country. They were the only trees on the wide stretch of Slivers's landscape, and last week he had nearly gone over the Great Divide!

"I'm just plain homesick," he muttered, "and that's the truth, so help me God!"

Long ago, when he was so exceedingly young as not to have had a past, Slivers Taylor had not been Slivers Taylor and had been a gentleman. Now he could talk the camp lingo as

profanely as any miner of them all, but when he was alone he sometimes indulged himself in the luxury of a gentleman's speech.

After a few moments he began restlessly scattering the stones at his feet with his stick. It struck him there was something artificial in the arrangement of those just at the base of the sage-brush which had given him ineffective shelter. Taking his bearings, he found he had passed beyond the boundary line of the Lone Johnny claim and was on that of the Gibraltar mine, the property of a prominent Eastern financier. Pushing the symmetrically arranged stones aside with his stick, he began to dig up the dry earth underneath. Interest in life returned as he prospected on a rival claim.

About ten inches below the surface he struck something hard and widened out his hole. Slivers was thoroughly conversant with the ready-to-hand safe deposit customs of mining camps, and drew out just what he expected to find—a tin can. Business papers and legal documents belonging to his neighbors, no doubt. The cover was off in a moment, and a compact little package fell into his lap. Slivers indulged himself in no scruples. He untied the string and removed the wrapping—then gave a snort of disgust. Only a woman's letters! The envelopes had been removed. He counted. There were eight of them, each numbered with blue pencil at the top.

When the first disappointment of his business instinct had subsided the mood awakened by the pine trees reasserted itself. Romance and curi-

osity thrive in the isolation of a miner's existence. He unfolded the thin, foreign-looking paper of the letter marked "No. 1." To his surprise there was no "My dear John" or "My dear" anyone written at the beginning—only the word "Mentone" across the top of the first sheet.

"I gave you my word, dear king of men, and here is the first letter. For one month I will write you and you shall write me freely—after that the silence—the deluge!"

"And we forget because we must,  
And not because we will!"

O, this life! I've sat on the reviewing stand more years than I ought to confess and watched battalions of men pass by. Some very choice specimens have taken a right-about-face and sat by my side for a while. Some wanted to stay there always, and some I almost wanted to have stay. It has been jolly fun, this life, with a few hours of tragedy interspersed, and at each and every moment I have been both spectator and participant.

"Then came—you! Just properly introduced by mere chance on the hotel piazza six nights ago, but now it seems strange that lightnings did not flash from the skies, and the Mediterranean at our feet did not dance into riotous, joyous waves of annunciation, and the hills behind us trumpet their message to lands beyond the seas! In that supreme moment:

"—grew my own small life complete,  
As Nature obtained her best of me—  
One born to love you, sweet!"

"But how absurd life is! I never recognized you! Blind and deaf and dumb lump of sordid clay that I was! We talked and talked and vaguely realized that we loved the same things, that we felt ease and peace and reciprocity of thought, and then we said good night. I couldn't sleep, but I did not realize that my hour had struck. I think I had grown into the habit of regarding myself as immune. O, those three lost days of non-realization! —of hovering on the borderland! Then came that night when we stood in

silence on the terrace, and you turned and looked into my eyes. The pain of a soul in prison clamored for release, and all that was highest and noblest in my womanhood answered to that silent appeal. No words spoiled the perfect moment, but when I went to my room I knelt at my window and whispered to the stars:

"It has come! God! it has come!"

"The next night we stood revealed to each other—proud, transfigured, glorified; then after our hour on the Mount of Transfiguration, we limped loathly down to the Valley of Pain!

"Dear, strong, brave, honest man, the perfect union which belongs to us of inalienable right cannot be! We have met too late! We must await, in dire loneliness, another incarnation. Yesterday I stood on the station platform and watched you glide away toward Paris. Tonight you are on the steamer, sailing out into the West. You had hardly gone before I wrote you mad, mad words—words which would have recalled you to my side, but I did not post them. Now I write calmly, and you will not read till many days and nearly half a continent lie between us. In that far Western mining town you will be:

"—holding hard by truth and your great soul,

Doing out the duty!"

And for me—

"Tell him that if I seem without him now, That's the world's insight! O, he understands!"

"I have lived this day in a dream. I am touched by a holy thing; awed, put out of breath, overwhelmed. Till you came I lived on the surface, and underneath the real me, starved and parched with thirst, slumbered. You struck the deep currents below the shallows, and now I am bewildered, hushed, grateful for a moment's calm. My very life went away in your keeping, but you left behind all I could wish for in a thousand lives short of the union which is denied. O lover of my life, farewell! Think! All my life long I shall be saying to you never, 'Welcome'—just, 'Farewell'!"

There was no signature and somehow Slivers knew it wasn't cowardice which forebore. There was reawakened in him the knowledge of a love so perfect that beginning and ending had no existence therein. The ex-gentleman raised the next letter speculatively in his hand, and hesitated, but life was particularly bleak just then.

"What's the dif?" he muttered. "I ain't blabbing, am I?"

Slivers, the outcast, the miner, began again to read:

"Your letter from Cherbourg has lived with me for two days and two nights, and every moment since it came I have been answering it in my heart. Moreover, I confess, I have written down page after page, the outpourings of a love which will be heard, a heart which must be eased. Those pages are now ashes. Better so! I must not, dare not write all I feel. Since your letter has come, I know I need no words to make you understand—the bond of sympathy is so entire.

"Where in what old, spent star,  
Systems ago, dead vastitudes afar,  
Were we two bird and bough, or man  
and wife?"

I know not, I.  
But this, O this, my very dear, I know:  
Your voice awakes old echoes in my  
heart,  
And things I said to you are said once  
more.

"O the triumph of your conquest,  
lord of my life! O the wonder of your  
love, master of my soul! We might  
have missed each other and died unsatisfied!  
Infinity hung on a tiny  
thread of chance, and, praised be God,  
swung our way! Because of one brief  
moment out of the aeons of eternity,  
your soul and mine will walk humbly  
exultant all our days!

"I don't see how a greater love could  
be possible in my life. I love you—  
body, brain, spirit of you; with body,  
brain, spirit of me. Life is not so rich  
that one twice finds the soul in entire  
accord. I rest in your strength, my  
master. 'He is ordained to call and I  
to come.' How everyone you know

must adore you! I fear my star is a  
world!"

"I am strangely uplifted, just by the  
knowledge that you live on this earth.  
All my love lives with you! You have  
entered and transfigured my life;  
lifted it from cheap clay to something  
precious with your alchemizing touch,  
and I am wholly yours—forever."

Long-silenced harmonies thrilled in  
the heart of Slivers. This was the way  
he had loved his wife long ago. Who  
was this woman who had such power  
to voice her love? Reverently he  
raised the third letter—the ex-gentle-  
man now—as if it were his right.  
There were but a few words on one  
page:

"Tonight I dare not write you except  
by curbing myself as in a steel compress.  
Yet I would not miss this mail and giving  
you one drop of comfort. O, the bitter,  
leering tragedy of life! We saw  
within paradise—and now we must  
turn away to a kitchen or an office or  
a stable! Comfort, did I say? For-  
give me, I can give you no comfort  
unless the thought of this tearing,  
devouring flame you have kindled in  
a woman's heart be a comfort. God  
help us both! God help us both! I  
beg you not to listen to my words—  
only wait for the next letter. I shall  
be braver soon."

Slivers's heart beat fast and hard as  
he opened the next sheet. Why had  
she had to write again? Why had the  
man not gone in answer to her cry of  
need?

"Dearest of the universe, I was mad  
to send you those words! How poison  
does its deadly work! Never again  
shall I be so weak! Don't think of  
me that way! Don't! No matter  
what I must suffer, no pain can be  
so poignant as the joy that you have  
dawned on my life. If my love be a  
tearing, devouring flame, it is also a  
holy hush and calm. Every moment,  
every word, every glance of our hours  
together, is to me the sacrament of

realization! Love and joy were born into the world—*infinite riches! infinite peace!*

"Do you mind that I don't tell you anything about my life—the externals? They seem too trivial when we have but one short month of self-indulgence out of a lifetime of renunciation and sacrifice. I really want only to say, 'I love you' over and over, all the time. I dare not trust myself to write long letters, or, rather, those I write I destroy.

"O, to let oneself go! To dare to be natural! How glorious! We can't! we can't! but I think the measure of our bigness is the measure of our daring. I have always had a dim faith that there might be a perfect marriage of souls and lives. It would be one in which there was no reserve—there needed be none because from the chrysalis of perfect knowledge, infinite love and infinite forgiveness would soar to the skies! The daily subterfuge; the need to seem other than one really is; the constant guarding against surprise; the necessary fitting of oneself to another's measure, and being what another's limited horizon requires—these whips and scorns make the allotted portion of you and me seem not so unbearable after all. Although union and realization are denied, we know what union and realization would be! There may be joy in love where sympathy is not entire, but it is the joy of renunciation for love's sake, and not the joy of completion because flesh answers to flesh, soul to soul, spirit to spirit, indivisibly, indissolubly, one in time and eternity.

"Are we arrogant, we who know, and who must live out the years with only the barren comfort of that knowledge? Ah, but we will be stronger than fate! stronger than life and death! no power in the universe can tear us soul from soul!

"We are the masters of the days that were. We have lived, we have loved, we have suffered—even so!"

God keep you safe, O wonder man! Good night."

Was any man on earth worthy of love like this? Slivers queried. Then he muttered to himself:

"Wonder woman is nearer the truth, I fancy," and opened the fifth letter:

"My king, I foolishly, weakly hoped to hear from you today. Did you ever long for a letter until you died of it? To me it is a new experience. Of course the saner brain knew it was not time to hear, but the hungry heart is one colossal interrogation point turned toward the arrival of American mails. In fact, my brain seems all to have run to heart, but when our month is over there will be time, O, there will be time! —to shut off the love-indulgence valves and turn on common sense. Do you know, I am glad, so glad, I have a brain. Else how could I mate with you in soul, O wonder man? How I'd love to know you well! I do know the heart and soul of you, but not the mind—not as I want to! I wish we might work together—then if I found I hindered, I'd stop and mend your gloves!

"I speak feelingly on this subject tonight, for everything I have attempted today has gone awry. O the tragedy of non-accomplishment! O the night which closes relentlessly on aeons of work undone! How do you, with your big interests, ever stay alive? I go nearly mad in my small way over my tiny failures to tie up loose ends. Today has gone the way of all days, and I am left lamenting!

"You will never know what it costs me to send you just these brief notes. My heart is always speaking to you and longing to write down burning words of love, love, love all the day long. You will remind me right here that I promised to write without reserve. Look down into your own heart and tell me if I could ever do that! Busy man, I mustn't! Weak woman, I mustn't! The tragedy of renunciation began for us with that first lightning flash on the Mount of Transfiguration—it will be our hourly portion all our days. I never allow myself to think of the 'one chance in a thousand.' Those words 'Too late' are warp and woof in my life.

"My peace, my happiness, my joy, my life of love, good night!"

The next letter began where that letter left off:

"O man, man, man! have you the slightest idea how I love you? How the whole world sings and shouts and reechoes you! you! you! Your letter—ah, great, merciful God in heaven!—no woman before ever had such a letter from man! Doubt you I couldn't—even though your own lips asserted your unworthiness—but I think there has been a little subconscious fear that when you were where you could think, and your well-ordered life with its great interests reasserted itself; when you realized the hopelessness of any issue for our love—there might be ever so tiny a substratum of regret. But your only thought is for me! Regret for me! Regret that I must suffer because I love you! Why, beloved, I glory in the suffering for love's sake. I stand proud and unashamed. I could defy a god who challenged my love for you! The only wrong would be not to dare to love you, not to dare to suffer for my love! The only shameful thing would be cowardice! I am brave. So long as I have your love, I am brave. I bear my suffering and my loneliness and the love which has come to me stripped of hope and stripped of a future, and glory in it as the climax and consummation of my life. To have a wonder man like you even pause at the portals of my heart is heavenly sweet; you have entered in and closed the door. I am awed and humbled and proud and exultant. Who am I, lord of my life, that thou shouldst be my guest?

"I am going to be brave and happy and fine without you so in spirit I may feel myself worthy to sit by your side, to look forever into your dear, frank, strong, wise eyes and read life's meaning there. Your love—tell me again that you love me!—is the chrism which washes away all unworthiness and leaves me—what love with infinite pardon beholds with possessing joy. I love you with great love. I am yours! Good night."

Only two more letters lay in Slivers's lap. In all his years of exile no voice from civilization had come to him with such gripping, compelling appeal as these human documents from an unknown hand. The years of hard, rough life dropped from him like a garment, and the soul of Slivers understood.

"My beloved, the second letter, mailed at Chicago, has reached me, and I dare not answer it—I must not. It will live forever as part of my life. You are with me every moment. It is wonderful—this distance-defying clasp of a perfect love! Separation is annihilated for you and me. Our love is all the greater, purer, truer, because no demands, no vows are made. It is just the giving ourselves out freely, freely, in understanding and sympathy, in joy and inspiration. Again and again I repeat those words:

"Tell him that if I seem without him now, That's the world's insight! O, he understands!"

"You are god-like in comprehension, human in love! O you! you! you! My heart sings a paean to you! Just that you are alive is everything. A thousand times a day a wave of love and longing and joy and thanksgiving sweeps over me. O the wonder of you, master of my soul!

"We can't have much of each other in this life and we have decided that even that little must be missed. But we have given ourselves one month of realization, a month which we shall cherish and magnify and whose memory will grow and blossom for our comfort in the barren years to come. How will it seem, this month, one year from now? Two years? A thousand years? Just the faded memory of a shadow, or the ashes of a flame, or the crystal of a great, vital life reality? Do you doubt, my friend? If the things of the soul, the things of the spirit, be the realities, we have lived our life to the full. Yet never think I feel satisfied—you man whom I have seen in the flesh—to live my life alone. When uplifted moods subside—God!

How the heart aches for the sight and  
touch of you!—Good night!"

It was a long time before Slivers raised the last letter and read:

"And now the end has come! I shall not write again and—we must not meet. Our ways lie apart. It is a mercy that I do not realize what this letter means. I am stunned, deadened, overwhelmed. I shall be brief. All words are inadequate.

"In you, O wonder man, my life has reached its culmination. I shall try bravely to stay on the heights and use my days for others as you would have me do. There will be no moment until I die when you are not my inspiration. Always remember that. And I shall not answer the letters which will come till your month, too, is complete, because—this letter is good-bye. There is only one chance in a lifetime that this letter is not good-bye.

"I love you! I love you calmly, madly, proudly, yearningly, selfishly, sacrificingly; with heart, soul, body; with each impulse of will, each beat of life's blood, each quiver of fear, each pang of loneliness, each aspiration for the highest, each dread of the lowest; with every inch of my being, every hope of future happiness, every desire of living, every pain of losing. I love you so that at the thought of you passion is stilled into peace; the red flame burns white in its intensity. I know now that there is a love so great that all outward exhibition seems trivial; a passion which does not spend itself and burn to ashes, but which glows in white heat, in halos of rapture, out to eternity. And now:

"Shall we not take the ebb who had the flow?  
Life was our friend. Now if it be our foe—  
Dear, though it spoil and break us! need  
we care  
What is to come?

"We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can  
dare  
And we can conquer, though we may not  
share

In the rich quiet of the afterglow  
What is to come!"

"Farewell, and remember everything you love in me always—except—this heart-break! Farewell."

The sun was low in the west when Slivers placed the last stone above the buried treasure and tottered back to camp. That night he hardly spoke to his companions, but crept into his bunk early, and lay there in wide-eyed silence and retrospect. He once had known such love; then the crime; then the flight; then the false report of his death sent home; then—ah, God! the soul-blighting, soul-searing passage of the years! Now only the miserable hulk and wreck of a life to his discredit—nothing, nothing on the balance side of the sheet!

He did not gain his strength rapidly. Every day there came those fainting attacks, but he crept out and lay either above the hidden treasure, or under the pines, where he could peer over the rocks and dream of the words of his wonder woman to her wonder man. One day he fell asleep there and dreamed. He heard a woman's voice say:

"I have always wanted to come to this Western country. I have never told you, but my father did something dreadful when I was a tiny child, and fled out here. I never knew what it was. When I was fifteen my mother told me, the night before she died, just the bare fact of his crime, and how news of his death had come to her one year after his flight. That was why we had always lived abroad. She made me promise not to try to discover what he had done."

Never before in Slivers's dreams had his daughter appeared to him except as the golden-haired baby. Never before had she told him how long his wife had survived the cruel blow. Suddenly he heard a man's voice say:

"She was very beautiful." Then his daughter replied:

"Yes. This miniature was painted at the time she was a bride and very happy. When I grew old enough to

know her, her face was very sad. I love to think of her this way, and I always wear this brooch. I wish she knew what happiness life has brought me. Perhaps she does."

In the ensuing silence Slivers opened his eyes to find himself staring upward at the blue sky through the parched pine needles of the stunted tree. It was all a dream. He was only Slivers Taylor, and the girl's father had been killed years ago in a mine.

Suddenly he heard the man again:

"But I haven't told you why I brought you up this hill in the fearful heat and seated you right here on these stones, instead of being a merciful husband and giving you the shelter of those magnificent pines."

Slivers pinched himself. Yes, he was awake. The voice of the girl answered:

"You wonder man! You always have a reason."

"Wonder man?" Had the letters gone to his brain. No woman like that could be here! Never in the world! What was the matter with him? Why couldn't he wake up?

"Did you believe, Margaret, that I could have the heart to destroy those letters you sent me during that month when we were saying good-bye?—before the one chance in a lifetime gave us completely to each other?"

"You promised."

"Yes, but when the time came I could not bear to do it, and so I buried them right there under that cross of stones—a vein of treasure richer than any other on our claim."

"O!"—and there were tears in the woman's voice—"how beautiful of you! O my wonder man!"

Slivers knew now that it was no dream. He pulled himself to the edge of the rocks and peered over. His eyes recognized the man first.

"It's the boss himself!" he muttered. Then the woman's face was lifted to the man's, and it was the face of Slivers's own mother! He trembled and fell back, white and unconscious. He was still so very weak.

When he woke the second time the

girl with the face of his mother was bending over him, while the man was just removing a brandy flask from his lips.

"Rather a bad scare you gave us, Taylor," he said heartily. "You looked deathly ill when my wife and I came up to inspect these trees."

"I've had a fever," explained Slivers, gazing with miserable eyes at the girl who wore the portrait of his wife at her bosom. Tender, fine, strong, true and beautiful as he knew his wonder woman must be, the best in his mother and the best in his wife looked down pityingly from her eyes to the wreck of a man lying on the ground. "I'm—I'm pretty seedy yet."

"Oh, we're so sorry," cried the woman. "We wish we could help you!"

Then the brandy began to do its work. Slivers slowly raised himself to his feet, and bowed with long-forgotten grace to the wife of the owner of the Gibraltar mine.

"I thank you, madam," he said. "We don't often see ladies here in these wilds. This is a red-letter day in a rough miner's calendar."

The man looked at him keenly.

"Can we help you back to your camp, Taylor?" he asked.

"No, thank you. I am stronger now. Good day, madam. Good day, sir."

They watched him move slowly, uncertainly down the hill.

"Poor devil! I never knew before he had been a gentleman," said the man. "So many of these miners have had a past."

"He can't have long to live," answered the woman. "His eyes were those of a wounded animal and tore at my heart strings. I shall never forget that face."

But Slivers's heart beat with fierce joy.

"Lord, I said I hadn't anything on the credit side of my account," he muttered, "but, Lord, I've lived straight out here, and now I guess you can count it to me for atonement that I gave that woman to her mother and the world!"

## A JULY MADNESS

By Maude Leonard Towson

ZELATA waved an equally derisive hand at the derisive ones wigwagging from the big surrey as it spurted down the soft, dusty road. Then, contrary to what was expected of her, she calmly continued her unaccustomed and painful labors. She laughed understandingly.

Severin, with tolerant amusement on his face, stood looking after the cloud of dust following the vehicle. The wavy lock that he hated had fallen down over his forehead and the ends of the scarlet four-in-hand at the collar of his *négligé* shirt waved in the breeze. His was the handsomeness of physical health and strength refined by a vivid mentality. He shook himself with almost a shrug as he stepped up into the tall, yellowing grass and also began to pick blackberries.

"It was Nell, of course," Zelata said in her lazy drawl. "That is her idea of a real cunning bit of humor—to drive off and leave us when we had got out to pick murderous berries for them to devour!" As she spoke, she put one lacerated finger in her mouth like a child. "She thought we'd run after them. They'll come back when they find we haven't followed!"

Severin laughed. "We can afford to wait!" he said. "See what we have!"

The two of them straightened up as they looked and listened. Crickets and grasshoppers chirred in the grass about them. Over the rail fence clambered an old grapevine heavily laden with its green grapes. The hot July sun flooded liquid gold across the rolling field before them, which dipped down into the cool, dark ravine bordering the Oswanto woods through

which they had just driven. Across the road a meadowlark whistled its hauntingly brief melody and was still. There was an immense silence.

Zelata shrugged her shoulders impatiently and moved away. "It rasps my nerves!" she said. Her hands full of berries resting in their leaf basket, she carefully seated herself on a ridge of grass bordering the country road, and mechanically Severin followed her.

Their eyes were on a level as she looked directly at him and once more the man was swept by an anger at himself that her smile should send such a riot through his veins. Almost sternly he forced himself to study the girl's countenance—a dusky, warm-tinted face that to the critical was too vivid in its tints, too rich in its curves, too assertive in its beauty. It also was the face of a girl too confident of her powers, but Severin had not gone that far in his analysis. Whatever Zelata Bonner said or did was invariably in the superlative degree. There were no half-tones, no shadings in her scheme of life, and no hesitation in reaching out her hand for whatever took her fancy. And so she smiled on Severin as she crushed the ripe berries between her ripe lips, and ignored the fact that the toes of her polished oxfords were submerged in the dust of the road.

"They don't seem to be coming back," Severin said at last. He stared at the fence across the road, and annoyance swept the girl's face as she watched him; then a shadow of wicked determination crinkled the corners of her mouth.

"I am very sorry," she said with

mock penitence. "It is all my fault, of course. To be sure, I didn't ask you to follow me out of the surrey, but still I apologize for your being marooned—."

"Nonsense!" Severin laughed protestingly.

"You don't in the least like being left here with me," the girl went on with daring frankness. "It is at least rude!" She laughed provokingly at him, her eyes a-sparkle, her pose alluring.

"If you want me to say you are as fascinating as Satan, as compelling as strong drink and as maddening—" The man held her hands in a grip that crushed and his eyes were reckless as he bent toward her. "I've fought against you ever since I met you, and you know it—and now you have won! I'm engaged to another girl, you know!" The last words were fairly shot out and there was more than a hint of pain in the voice.

The girl did not try to release her hands and she did not appear moved at the news. Something gipsyish and altogether careless bloomed on her face, and she even leaned toward the man who was fairly scowling at her. A primeval feeling of jealousy toward this girl whom she had never seen surged up from the depths and lent a possessive note to her rich voice.

"We—we'll forget the other girl today," she almost whispered. "She has no right—why should she spoil other people's happiness? Phil—why did you speak? Is it—do you really care, Phil?"

Almost without volition he kissed her on the lips. A haze seemed to shroud his mind. Helen, with the deep, true eyes, the delicate, sensitive face, the girl that he knew he loved with all that was best in him, seemed removed an immeasurable distance. He had the feeling of one in a dream, that could he but see her, hear her voice, this fascination would vanish. He groped amid bewildering emotions and scored himself for a coward and a fool—and Zelata laughed, joyously, wildly, as some wild, free creature.

She was on her feet and so was he, his hand still in hers.

"Come!" she cried, "we'll forget everything! We'll forget the Pelhams' lodge and the house-party and the vanished surrey and girls that we're engaged to and men that think we're going to be engaged to, and just live! We are lost in a strange land, stranded at the edge of a mighty forest five miles from the Pelhams', and maybe there are bears that will eat us! I've a fancy to meet them! Come, Phil!"

Hand in hand they raced down the road, and in a minute had plunged into the woods. The crackling of leaves and twigs beneath their modern-shod feet echoed in the motionless quiet. Severin, in his hasty jog-trot, for they were still running, had glimpses of green moss and dank, pallid mushroom growths gleaming at him. Some of Zelata's recklessness had got into his blood and wiped out all memory. He drew a deep breath and was glad he lived.

Presently he halted, for the girl had stopped, panting. She turned a face like a great, velvety rose on him as she stood, her hand at her heart.

"I can't run as fast as you!" she said breathlessly.

Then they walked on in the beautiful greenness, his arm about her shoulders, not thinking of the fact because it seemed so natural that it should be so. Sometimes she mocked the call of the birds; once they stopped to watch a gray squirrel. The tragic little self-revelation on the country road under the shining sun was wiped out, together with all thoughts of obligations and struggles. They were simply two vividly alive young creatures, happy that they were with each other, asking nothing of the future, thinking not of the past. She seemed possessed by some inimitable, unending spirit of mirth. It was as though she were afraid to slow down the mental pace she had set, and Severin met her more than half-way.

The unconscious force he had exerted in banishing memory had reacted and

lent him a fictitious brilliancy, for Severin was a quiet, deliberate man. In his mind was a wonder that he had ever fought. In the far space of vanished worlds there was a girl he had called Helen, who had meant something to a man called Severin, who was a lawyer and walked paved streets and demanded three meals a day; but that had nothing to do with him, a man of the woods who had nothing in the universe but these great, silent trees that rustled far overhead, a leafy path before him and beside him a woodsy creature with scarlet lips and dancing eyes.

He bent again, still in his dream, and kissed her. She smiled at him, and he felt very contented. It was restful to have abandoned the civilized process called thinking. It was much better just to live. Presently the road skirted the edge of the woods again and a little farmhouse appeared.

"I'm hungry," said Zelata. "Let's see if they will sell us food!"

Laughing, they raced up to the side door where a woman sat preparing vegetables. She looked at them with interest.

"I can give you apple pie and corned beef and biscuit," she suggested.

"Oh, no!" the girl cried almost sharply. "We must have—what is it people like us eat, Phil? Oh, we must have cheese and black bread and watercress!"

The woman frowned. "There's cottage cheese," she said, and disappeared into the house, coming back soon with a brown paper bag full. She protested at the coin Severin forced upon her and stood watching them as they disappeared into the woods. No gypsies, in her recollection, had ever appeared wearing patent-leather shoes and clothes that spoke of boulevard tailors. She shook her head and went back to her vegetables.

Under a dwarf sassafras-tree they sat on an old log and explored the bag. The corned beef was indeed there, and Zelata made a face at it and then ate her share with enjoyment. Severin watched in idle enjoyment her smooth

brown fingers busy in dividing the food. Why had he ever asked anything better of heaven than this? What was it he had wanted, anyway? He smoked, lying prone on the fir needles, staring into the green roof overhead, and the girl wove leaf garlands and once brushed back from his forehead the lock that he hated. It was as though years ago they had met and confessed they loved each other, and the first wonder of it was past. A little chill breeze swept through the woods and rustled the mitten-like sassafras leaves above them. Mechanically they started on their way again, for the little breeze was the advance guard of the evening shadows.

"Where are we?" the girl breathed.

"I haven't the remotest idea," the man had to admit, and was reassured by her ready laugh.

"We'll just have to walk till we find the home road," he added.

A chill like that of the breeze that had stirred the sassafras leaves touched both of them. The word home had broken the spell, and the world outside the woods burst through the haze and gripped Severin with sharp realization. He walked very straight and his chin was held high. Soberly the girl watched him, and there was something wistful in her gaze.

"Don't worry, Phil," she said, almost curtly. "What an obstreperous conscience you must have! She shouldn't grudge one day! I'm going to let you go back to her!"

Severin winced as though she had commented on his own weakness, yet her ready speech bore a faint relief, for his sudden self-accusation was intensified by the wonder if it could be she really cared instead of having been moved by a whim. The light was dimming and lent her face a delicacy he had missed. She was even appealing.

"Good heavens!" he said hoarsely. "I—I am not at all sure I want to go, Zelata! What is it you have done to me? Do I love you or have you bewitched me? How many years ago was it they left us out on that road

among the blackberry vines? Has this day been real and all the rest a dream—?"

He was holding her from him at arm's length, fiercely studying her, and his voice was rough. There were lines on his face the morning had not seen there.

She stirred restlessly and looked away from the eager, demanding face above her. She was tired of a sudden, and the thought of the Pelhams was hateful. A rebellion against the ending of this care-free companionship swept over her undisciplined soul, and with an amazed pang she wondered if such an unheard-of thing had happened that by way of malicious mischief she had stumbled on the one man in all the world.

The thought was bewildering. To her unbounded amazement as well as his, Zelata began to cry sobbingly and reached out slim, brown fingers toward Severin. For a moment he murmured incoherently and soothingly until she had controlled her tears. Then, as though she had been a child, he patted the riotous brown hair and for an instant his cheek touched hers. Quietly, as though leaving something behind, they went on and lights flashed through the trees.

"Pelhams'," the man said, and the girl nodded.

He wished he knew, he wished he knew! He wished he could think calmly, sensibly. Helen! If he could see the girl called Helen who haunted him indistinctly and convince himself that she was real! He was conscious that Zelata shook herself once as

though emerging from water as they broke from the woods that bordered the house. A cry went up at the instant from the big veranda, a babel of questions, of relief from watching, of jests, and they were swept into a circle of people who were all gray shadows to Severin. Then, of a sudden, one of the shadows in a flash showed itself to him as a slender girl in a traveling-suit who was half-shyly starting toward him—a girl with great, honest eyes and a tender mouth and the serenity of complete trust and confidence mantling her.

"Helen!" cried Severin in a voice that to some of the listeners held an entirely unnecessary amount of rapture. The haze that had choked his brain was rent in an instant of shame and realization, and as he crossed to her in humiliation of soul Severin knew at last. At the moment he felt his whole life of devotion would not wipe out that day.

There was a ringing laugh from a little group near the door where the hall light shone forth, touching Zelata's dusky hair and tantalizing face. There were no traces of tears to be seen, and if her laugh was sharp and her vivaciousness forced, no one guessed it—least of all, Severin. She was inventing an elaborate account of how they had been lost in the woods, and while four men listened Zelata was most obviously talking at one. Severin sighed in relief and looked again at Helen in tremulous disbelief at his good fortune.

"It was a madness!" he breathed to the dark, mysterious woods. And being a wise man that was his only confession.



### THE NATURE OF THE CREATURE

"YOUR cook—"

"Oh, she is so careless that I don't believe she could drop a remark without breaking her word."

## THE WAY OF THE VINEYARD

By Amos De Lany

ASSUREDLY this was Adelaide who flounced from one chair to another, talking fast and loud, waving her hands bewilderingly, and painting redder her puffy cheeks with each new, long, deep breath. None other could have known of the scarlet slippers or the lost cameo or the candied caraways. It was Adelaide, but an Adelaide who bore sad tidings of the cost of adding length of days to one's blessings; one whose manner and whose face shouted at the quiet little woman who smiled now and then, the rude news that time was really ruthless.

They had not met for sixteen years—long enough, the quiet woman knew, for changes vastly more vital to have come about—but somewhere she had nursed a thought that those years, normal enough in every other way and very kind, might have stood still in her behalf and Adelaide's. At least, why need they have grown so desperately different?

In the thought of Adelaide's coming she had been a little girl again, and she had in these last hours lived over and over the Winters at Miss Kennedy's, when only to Adelaide, as dear heart's idol, could she take herself and her secrets. Smiling gently, she was telling herself that she herself was old, but that she had not changed. Secrets she had still; yes, and told them—but to the laughing giant whom she had married, Durant Attwood, lawyer, big and broad and wide of heart and body and mind—a man. And deeper far than any trivial awe at such a commonplace discovery as that the years do move, was her widening certainty that

this Adelaide, once her soul's other half, was not now of Durant's kind. It was like her, too, that therewith grew a purpose to let no straw escape to show her guest the breeze's drift.

Adelaide was journeying absently about the drawing-room, dropping here and there a word, staring vacantly at an ornament or opening a book at random and dropping it unseen.

"Sarah, dear," she said, as she sank gasping into a chair, "how nice your home is—ah! So odd, so quaint, dear. So like you. Prim and quiet, always—and so like moonlight—'yourself, my moon.' Poetry sounds dreadful from a fat lady, doesn't it, dear? As improper as catsup on pie. That's imagery more in tune with my weight. But oh, my dear! fat ladies have souls for art, sometimes. Souls can starve while bodies thrive, you know; but they don't die of it. They live on, in torture, to tease you. There! You mustn't think *my* soul is ailing. It only wants more than it's got, and that's an endemic disease—or is it a sign of health?"

This note of aspiration was a touch of former days, and Sarah, the serene lace across her bosom covering a crater of tenderness, arose and held impulsive hands toward her.

"Hasn't it been, then, so very well with you?" she said softly. Their eyes met, and Adelaide fell back in her chair, rocking rapidly and most ungracefully, her feet meeting the heavy carpet in rhythm and with emphasis.

"Well?" she repeated stridently. "Of course, it's been well—in every way but the essential one! . . . Oh, what am I saying? . . . I

must be insane. Believe me, dear, I never let myself *think* that before—and now I've said it!"

Again she repelled the outstretched hands of consolation, and Sarah remained standing, studying with grave wonder the plump, red face, not prettier for the contortions of tears. Here was no matter to be grasped offhand. It was distress, and therefore had a claim; but the manner of it, and much more its cause, seemed like to prove distasteful. A sob precipitated her vague hesitancy. It was Adelaide who suffered, and loyalty, no less, was at stake. Again she pondered upon the rebellious emphasis with which the feet met the carpet.

"To lack essentials," she said. "That must indeed be bitter. . . . You mustn't think I do not sympathize. I've never lacked; but you used not to turn from me?"

The trailing question in her tone sprang from an uncertainty soon dispelled.

"But what do you name essentials?" cried Adelaide. "Life and liberty, I suppose? And love, maybe? And money?"

"Oh, not money, especially, I should think," said Sarah. "Not if——"

"And that's it!" interrupted Adelaide. "I have all the rest—all but that; and here before you just now I declared that in all ways but the essential one it was well enough with me. I didn't think I was capable of loving money more than I love my husband and my children; but it seems I am. I'm bitter. Why shouldn't I be? Pah! I am unclean; for how could such things leap to my tongue if I didn't *feel* them, down deep? Can you tell?"

"Your children?" said Sarah wistfully, after a little. "Three of them, are there not?"

Adelaide's face shone with new light as she looked up.

"Don't you see?" cried Sarah brightly. "Is it for them that—that some things seem essential? And when you say what might perhaps be sordid if your own ease was your aim, you say it for them. Isn't that clear?"

There was a smothered little cry, and Adelaide buried her face in her hands. When she met Sarah's gaze there was an eager hunger in her face, the demand of the flaunting sunflower for that which fragile violets have always to spare. The women looked upon each other in all the flaring fulness of the contrast between them; and the dear truth of comfort, the silent messenger of blood to blood, passed down the highroad of their eyes from one heart to the other, and next they found themselves in an embrace.

## II

To visit Durant in his offices was a pleasure rare enough to rouse in Sarah's heart delightful thrills before the wide doors accepted her from the street and the sudden elevator leaped upward with her. When the steel gates of the shaft met behind her she marched down the corridor with her head held high for thinking that these paved floors and marble walls were part of Durant's life. Mostly all that she ever saw took value in her eyes from Durant's share in it; she paused with fond pride to read his name upon the ground-glass of the doors, and in the outer office where his clients awaited audience she gloated mildly that she had not to advance to the sultan's private ear by way of sending in a card.

He was seated at his desk, telephoning, and he smiled at her, his eyebrows raised in surprise. He was a man of splendid size, whose excellent proportions barred ungainliness. Deep-chested and broad-shouldered, he towered above the telephone, lifting it from the desk that, sitting, his lips might reach it, the instrument seeming a toy as he nodded his great, tawny-maned head behind it. Lost in a hollow of leather upholstery, drawn to a window from which she might have seen past long ranges of stone-and-mortar mountains to the distant, sparkling, ferry-strewn harbor, Sarah turned from all that to watch him with happy

eyes. When he had finished he came quickly to where she waited, his greeting as rich in tenderness as his body in bone and brawn.

"Are you dreadfully busy?" she asked, and she did not wait for an answer. Some men, she was thinking, would have felt necessary the grand airs of alarm at her intrusion, freezing the simplest message. It was not so with this one, whose manner was forever a compelling incentive to her to tell him her thoughts. His very size made easier the throwing upon him of any burden, and his poise and certainty, she knew, were sure to lessen every grief they shared. But this day's errand was not of sorrow.

"Adelaide Tayloe was with me this morning," she said, reaching upward to pluck the lapel of his coat. "I told you last night that she was coming. Dear, she is in such trouble; and I am so glad! for it is just the only trouble that we can surely make right. It has been years since I saw her, and she has changed in her appearance—oh, very much!"

"If that's her trouble—" began Attwood, but Sarah would not listen.

"And she has three children!" she pursued.

"Or that, either—" he said, but he did not go on.

"And her *husband!*" cried Sarah. "Durant, I believe she worships him—and he has run through everything he ever had—I don't know how. But, dear, they have only the house in Baltimore that was Adelaide's home. That is all, and they actually, dear, she told me, haven't a hundred dollars of money left. And it's a beautiful house, and they lived so nicely there. I spent two Christmases with her—well, very many years ago. Now?"

Attwood had lost his smile, and a small pucker crept between his brows.

"Did she come just to ask—?" he said, and when it was denied he seemed relieved.

"Sarah," he went on, "there's been no little gossip from Washington over this Tayloe—in the papers, you know; and I've heard it from some people who

are there now and then. They say he's a fool: not an ignorant fool nor a blanked fool, but just a plain business fool. And he thinks he's a generalissimo of finance; and he is quarrelsome. That's what got him into the papers, you know: his row with the Secretary of State. I never met him; but there's been no end of information concerning him since that affair took place. . . . What is it you want to do, dear?"

"I don't want anything to do with him!" Sarah exclaimed indignantly. "I have money, haven't I? Well, I want to give Adelaide some of it."

"But you have your cheque-book."

"Oh, more than that! I want you to sell some shares or something. A good deal of money, you know."

"But, my dear, upon what security?"

"Durant!"

"I'll make them a present from my own banking-account, Sarah, if that will please you," said Attwood. "But you mustn't think of lending any of your small fortune without security. Let's be reasonable. There is a house, you said. Is it mortgaged?"

Long enough for a few tears to dim her gentle eyes, Sarah stared at him dumbly. Then came to her the thought of Adelaide—in spirit still, maybe, the little girl who had been closest to her, but in truth not the same, and one, after all, whose life lay beyond the pale of taste within which Durant's world and hers had been made. He was hers, and his ways and his likings hers also. Had she perhaps for an instant desired it otherwise? That was folly; for the garden was for but two, and she guarded it with fine care that it might be so kept.

"I don't know," she said, and her smile came back. "You know all about such things. What are you for, if not to make it safe and sound? You're never such a growly watch-dog, anyway, unless my poor little investments are in question. But you'll attend to it; won't you, dear?"

Attwood nodded his head amusedly.

"I'll write to Harrison directly," he said. "And if the property is right

and isn't too heavily encumbered it may be that a short-term mortgage for five thousand or so will not be more than it can stand. I must say, though, it's a good deal of a nuisance!"

"Oh, yes!" cried Sarah archly. "Your wife troubles you so often! But you'll send the money this afternoon?"

"I say!" he protested, "you're too ridiculous, Sarah. Which of you by taking thought, don't you know, can turn the wheels of business? And we don't even know yet that there is such a house."

"Business, business!" she mocked him as she gathered her wraps for her departure. But in her kiss was all her faith and trust, and something more, a glowing joy that the least thing in which she held a part was by her interest in it captain of every inch of this big, hearty, wholesome man.

### III

THE Winter uncoiled its spiral of good days and bad; Spring passed lightly over the heedless city, breathing fondly upon the parks, and sweltering Summer found Durant Attwood and his wife in Switzerland. Those were happy times, and so the weeks melted and vanished swiftly, and presently the world turned over in a night and Sarah awoke at home.

The clear air of Autumn was already besmudged with smoke from the blaze beneath the caldron of current events, and by a remorseless State Committee Durant was bidden to add his voice to the noise of the crackling thorns. In the second week of November, brown and hale from his week's rest in the mountains after the hard campaign, he returned to her. Half a day at the office was all she gave him then, but it availed, she saw that night, to lay upon him a weight so unaccustomed as to betray its presence. He was uneasy, and, a rare reversal of the usual case, he shared the burden with her.

"Sarah," he said, "has that gilt-edged Baltimore mortgage of yours been on your mind?"

"Why, no," she replied lightly. "Are not my lawyers attending to those matters?"

Attwood made a wry face.

"Not very well, I'm afraid," he observed. "Do you happen to know that your investment of rather more than five-and-a-half thousand has not only paid you *no* interest, but that the principal is due in ten days?"

Sarah turned a dismayed face toward him; more at his tone than his words.

"But Adelaide has written to me ever so regularly," she objected. "I supposed it must be right, or you or she or somebody would have said something about it."

"Somebody would have," said Attwood, "if those lawyers of yours had been worth their salt. Seriously, Sarah, it was a foolish venture at the very first, and I ought never to have let you put a penny into—"

"Hush! Hush!" she cried, and when he would not be still she found a merry way to drown his clamoring for blame.

"Don't think I've neglected it altogether," he said, when she would let him speak. "I've had Peck send all the proper notices and papers to Tayloe, but he's paid no attention to any of them. I'm afraid he's no good, that fellow. But it's silly to blame *him*, when my own folly let you tie yourself up in the venture. I feel disgraced, Sarah, to have bought such a gold-brick—and with your money!"

He crossed the floor with impatient strides, his hands deep in his trousers pockets.

"Is it all gone, then?" asked Sarah. Attwood paused, and stared curiously at her, a smile at length arriving.

"No," he said. "Thank heaven, I wasn't quite so idiotic as that. The mortgage is perfectly sound, and the property is worth a good bit more than its face. We shall get the money back right enough—but what a way of doing business! *That's* what hurts! And of what is the fellow thinking? Wouldn't you imagine he'd at least recognize the obligation? Does he suppose we daren't foreclose?"

From propounding these questions Attwood fell into muttering, and soon his smoothed brow declared the matter dismissed from his mind. He went down to dinner with his nightly buoyancy, and Sarah, making no doubt that such perplexing intricacies were meat-and-drink to her husband's mind, thought no more of it all.

A fortnight later, in her morning's mail came a letter from Adelaide that stirred her heart.

DEAREST SARAH:

How can I write you all the things I am feeling? If I were not so sure of your dear, good heart I could not write at all, but I know you cannot have changed so very much from the little girl who used to barter secrets with me at Miss Kennedy's. If it seems sometimes as though, with the falling to pieces of everything else in my poor, cracked world, you, too, were different, I know that it is only my silly part talking wicked nonsense to make me want to die. And I have so much to live for, now. There are the children, three of them, old enough to be noticed—and admired, I must confess—and there is Edwin. You can never know how much he needs me, or how noble he is, unless, which heaven forbid, your husband should also become what the world calls ruined and a failure.

I am shocked sometimes to think how slightly I am affected by some of the things that have happened to me. It would have killed me ten years ago to think of our living in these miserable little rooms—can you believe it?—over a bake-shop! And yet I have not felt it. Really, I felt worse when little Edwin could not return to Dr. Weston's after the Spring recess—poor laddie, to break off in the middle of the year was such a proclamation of distress.

And then the dreadful confusion over that money that you were so sweet about last year. My dear, you know I could have kissed your shoes when you said that day that you were determined to help us yourself; and I would do anything for you, to pay you. If it had been a gift, I should have spurned it, Sarah, much as I love you. You know I was the one who insisted on papa's house being taken as security. You would not hear of it then, but, of course it was so arranged. And now, dear—will you believe it?—some vile creature named Peck in your husband's office has written such an *insulting* letter to Edwin! To be sure, your husband is not to blame for that, but I must say, darling, I think he is rather *careless* to have such men about him, engaged in his business matters.

You know I can grasp nothing of fact or detail in these affairs, and, luckily, I have no need to, for Edwin is a perfect genius—

almost a wizard—with figures. But one thing I know, and it was one of the first things I ever learned: that is, that the house in Charles street is an extremely valuable and desirable property. Papa said so many, many times. And Edwin says it is worth, handsomely, far more than all our indebtedness, present or potential. So your husband or his man Peck need not worry, Edwin says. Probably he has been misinformed by some wretched real estate man here who wants to depreciate our resources that he may get papa's house for nothing, Edwin says. Of course, we are sorry that there is a little interest due, but you must know that the whole sum of principal and interest is only a bagatelle compared with the real value of the property. Edwin says if it were not for the friendship between you and me he could laugh at the bare thought of the house being mortgaged for such an insignificant, beggarly sum as that. Isn't that generous of him, Sarah dear?

But this is enough of my troubles. Only Christmas is so near! And we used always to have such jolly Christmases. You were with me through two holiday seasons, you know. Ah, me! Sarah, what ups and downs there are in life—as many now, I'm sure, and as startling as in the days of romance. If only the fairies had not died, I might almost look for a happy ending to my little tragedy.

Your loving

ADELAIDE.

And Sarah wrote in reply:

ADELAIDE DEAR:

I am so sorry, and I am shocked and bewildered by your letter. I don't know the first thing about it all. I leave everything to Durant, you know, and he will surely make it all as it ought to be. I am sending you a box for Christmas. Poor dear, you must be brave and I know that all will yet be well. In the meantime, the children shall have a merry Christmas. Don't you dare to send me anything. I am swamped with presents—they are a dreadful bore.

#### IV

"WHY cannot the weather be positive?" Sarah was asking herself merrily. "Anything definite, even a tornado, would be so much better than this."

It was a vague, drab day, with pavements greasy from a sticky moisture that could not fall like bold rain, but must needs sift and ooze sneakingly out of the air. Earlier, there had been a promise of sunshine, but that was

swallowed up in the formless vapor that shrouded the city: the depressing mugginess that makes rich all who traffic in stimulants.

While she brooded, a card was brought to her, and presently, so limpid of soul as to be amazed at his coming, she found herself in her drawing-room, welcoming a stout and pompous man who named himself Mr. Edwin Tayloe.

She had with him none of the emotion which had been hers when Adelaide was there, for she had no memory of him as he had been to jar with his actual presentment; but that strangeness, the warning within her that her guest was of a race not like Durant's and hers, was more strong in her than ever before. He was heavily formed, heavy-limbed and heavy-jawed, with black hair tossed about in a fashion that might have been fetching in a slim lad of twenty. His face was shaven and his cheeks were pale and fat as were his lips, not an evil face, but surely not a strong one. Sarah feared she would not like him, and as he released her hand and drew himself up in portly dignity, his little soul proclaimed its tune so clearly that not even innocence like hers could deceive her longer. So well was his message set forth by his manner that when he spoke his voice was like an echo.

"I'm a man of affairs, Mrs. Attwood," he said. "I'm a very busy man, and a man of very wide experience. I'm not easily to be deceived, Mrs. Attwood." He waited for her to speak.

"Please sit down, Mr. Tayloe," she said.

"I prefer to stand," he replied with puzzling bitterness. "Of course you know why I am here," he continued. "Adelaide has succeeded at last in letting her natural goodness of heart get us into rather hot water. There's no denying that. Again and again, I've had to tell her, when she has asked me to accept this man's loan or invest that man's money for him, that she is so good-hearted that she will certainly be tricked in the end. And this time, I dare say, if I were not, fortunately,

here to unravel it all, she would find my words only too true."

"Now, really, Mr. Tayloe," said Sarah, "if this is a matter of business you must please excuse me. I am woefully ignorant of all that, and, besides, it cannot possibly concern me . . . though certainly I am sorry to learn that Adelaide may have been indiscreet."

"You are sorry!" repeated Tayloe. "Upon my word!"

"Please excuse me," said Sarah firmly; but he blocked the door.

"I am not in the habit of discussing my affairs with women," he observed. "In fact, I am not in the habit of discussing my affairs at all. If you will pardon the seemingly personal tone of my remark, my affairs are of considerable importance, of too much importance to be lightly talked over. But we shall soon have finished with this matter.

"You may be relieved to learn," he continued grandly, "that I am not disposed to be harsh; for, in the first place, Mrs. Attwood, you have been most unfair in this transaction. Indeed, I have no hesitation in saying that I believe your attitude would be most interesting to the District Attorney!"

"That will do, Mr. Tayloe!" She was a small woman with a soft voice, and she used it gently. But it appeared that she spoke the truth; for, as her eyes blazed, the soaring chariot descended out of the heavens and bumped along the ground.

"I beg your pardon!" he cried in haste. "But now, my dear Mrs. Attwood, the fact is that the house is as good as gone, and not a penny to show for it! Eaten up; wiped out! And all because—now, really—because we trusted you!"

There were tears in his voice, and Sarah, astounded and incredulous, was full of pity for that which seemed like a worthy feeling. He watched her greedily.

"That cannot be true!" she exclaimed. "But I know less than nothing of what it is all about. If you

haven't been pleased it can only be through a wicked misunderstanding. Mr. Attwood will arrange it. He will do just what is right, I know."

"No doubt, no doubt," agreed the tearful man, and from a pocket he produced a document. "And first," he said, "you will show yourself not wholly heartless? You're not all dead to Adelaide's sufferings, Mrs. Attwood. Think of her. . . ."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Sarah. "I don't know about this. I do not sign my name, you know. It is not my custom. . . ."

She was wondering with all her heart if the break in his voice was real. She hesitated. Suddenly she drew from him.

"You have *seen* him—my husband!" she declared. "And you come to me, then? You are not honest, sir! Certainly, I can do nothing that my husband has refused to do."

The cloak of sackcloth tumbled from his shoulders as quickly as it had draped itself around him. His arms waved, and he shouted.

"Oh, certainly!" he sneered. "The wicked Spenlow and the simple-hearted Jorkins! A precious team of swindlers! But I'll pay you out! Isn't it criminal and indecent to snatch away a man's house for a bare tenth of its value? Do you suppose any Grand Jury in the world would let such rascality go unpunished? It's cutthroat thuggery! It's blackmail! It's conspiracy! It's—"

While, purple-faced, he fought with his rage for breath, Sarah fled past him up the dim stairway, the horrid shivering, like a shrinking from dirt, clinging to her long after he had left the house.

## V

It was near the end of an afternoon in early April when, sighing, Sarah took from the tray an envelope bearing her name in Adelaide's thin, high characters. Since that other letter there had been one of gracious thankfulness and two so bitter and so cruel that she was glad that for many weeks no more had arrived. She wished she dared destroy

this one unread; and she held it, meditating, for an instant. A letter was only paper, she was thinking; but then, it was not ordinary paper. No, it would be almost like murder; and so, sighing again, she opened it, bracing herself for any shock within. As she glanced timidly at the first words, there was a sharp catching of her breath, and she surrendered herself to the message.

### DEAREST SARAH:

Write to me, dear, and say you forgive me for those wicked letters. How could I ever have said such things to you? There is so much that seems unreal and impossible to me now that I cannot help hoping that all that is part of it. But that would be more than I can possibly deserve, and I have already happiness far beyond any that is mine by right.

I am in bed, Sarah, and as I write the church bells are ringing. It is Easter Sunday, dear, and the bells are telling me such wonderful things, whispering to me of all the sweet, solemn mysteries that hedge our life about, so that ecstasy treads on drudgery's heels and new and finer joys spring out of the depths of every sorrow. Am I hysterical, dear? Or silly? You would not think so if you knew. The sound of the bells as it floats in my window brings to me such a glorious song of peace and light, of a Risen Saviour, of life everlasting; and, dear, I have shared the descent into the pit and the splendid achieving of new life; and I have brought glad proof of the life eternal with me, and it lies warm on my breast as I write. . . . Now do you know, Sarah?

Sarah understood, and the letter fell from her hands. In a passion of yearning she snatched up a pillow and hugged it and kissed it fiercely. Weak and faint, she fell weeping across her bed.

When Attwood came searching for her he found her drying her eyes, and making brave faces at herself in the mirror. Smiling, she gave him the letter, but as he finished it and drew her silently to him, a new storm of tears broke upon her, and eager for comfort she moaned unchecked, clinging fast to the arms that gripped her savagely. It was a distressing moment; most of all to the man, who met here a grief for which he had no medicine. Helpless, he stood with jaw set grimly firm and listened to her sobs.

"I love you! I love you!" she cried, when she could speak. "But, Durant, how I envy her! She has that! . . .

and we have—money. Oh! wouldn't we trade? How insignificant all else appears, beside that! And how useless I feel! Durant, she has that! Let's add to her what we can. . . . The house—we don't need it, do we? Very much? To give it back is just the least we can do. . . ."

Attwood seized eagerly upon her

thought. Here, after all, was a peg in her sorrow on which a shred of comfort might be hung. That there was in it the least sacrifice on his own part made him grasp it more gladly.

"The very least!" he whispered, close against her cheek; and their lips met.



## THE MIRACLE

By Charlotte Becker

**L**OVE came to me; his brow was seared  
With knowledge born of pain,  
And deep within his eyes, dead years  
Gave up their ghosts again.

He bade me follow down a way  
All bare and rough and dim.  
Gaily and unafraid, I went  
To share his load with him.

Now strange what Love and me befell,  
And yet most wondrous sweet:  
At every step, the stony road  
Grew smooth beneath our feet;

And, from each barren place we passed,  
Such fragrant blossoms sprung,  
Love's weary brow was cleared again,  
Love's eyes once more were young.



**E**THEL was the first girl that George took out in his new motor."

"Does she take it as a proof of affection?"

"That's what she can't quite make up her mind about."

## PINK PAJAMAS

OR, PARKER IN SEARCH OF A BERTH

By Edwin L. Sabin

THE long aisle of the Pullman, converted now by the opposing double tier of berths and the two rows of dark green curtains into a narrow canyon extending to the car ceiling, stretched dim and spectral, lighted by only a low flame at either end. In the middle of it Parker, suddenly brought to consciousness, confusedly and frenziedly blinked about him. He was a little man, was Parker, in pink pajamas and bare feet, and with head somewhat bald.

The aisle was unoccupied, save by himself; with rumble and roar and sway the train was rushing through the night. Close beside him a loud explosive snore, of masculine timbre, regularly rose and fell as if manipulated by a piston, and from the end which he was facing emanated another snore, guttural, choky.

These things dawned slowly upon Parker's struggling senses; until, with a horrified gasp of alarm, he realized where he was, and why.

The train was not wrecked? No! 'Twas only a nightmare which had called him forth, thus, seeking frantic exit ere the roof should crush him; and had abandoned him, thus, in the shadowy aisle. He was walking in his sleep again, confound him! And he had thought himself over that embarrassing, dangerous failing. Unless he quit, some time he would break his neck, surely. Now, he must get back into his berth. Br-r-r-r! He discovered his bare feet. Always fastidious, he was shocked and ashamed. Well, well, well!

Pricked by modesty, Parker hastily

sought for his berth. Where he was standing was No. 8, announced by the nickel figure upon the curtain. No. 12 was at the other end; however, when he had arrived he was confronted by No. 2! No. 12 was at the other end, then; he was still a bit addled—and a sleeping car in the midst of the night is apt to prove puzzling in its monotony, anyway. Hastily, once more, he retraced his steps, scurrying along the canyon, noting that the numbers were ascending, stubbing his toe upon a projecting grip, and being thrown by the motion of the train against berths to right and left, until he reached 12.

Upper 12 was his; the curtains before it were unbuttoned, as he must have left them; and without delaying for the steps he placed a foot upon the edge of the lower berth, to clamber aloft.

A swerve of the train swung him inward, and losing his poise he hung for a moment while it seemed that he was going, curtains and all, into the lower berth itself. His knees landed hard upon the inmate thereof.

"Goodness me!" ejaculated a feminine voice. "Porter! What's the matter!"

Parker desperately hauled himself upward; again the train swerved, and he was hung over the edge of his berth, at his stomach; his head and chest in, but his legs kicking vainly outside and below. One foot penetrated through the crack between the curtains. Thunder!

"Goodness! Porter! Come here, porter!"

The appeal was trembly with alarm;

as Parker finally succeeded in wriggling to stability, he heard the porter's bell ring imperatively, summoning.

Parker, now in place, made haste to slide beneath his covers, where, with a guilty feeling, he lay rigidly still, waiting. He could not apologize; an apology would scarcely be respectable. For him to address a female (he recollects her; she looked like an old maid) under such circumstances was entirely out of the question. He could only lie, nervously trusting that the worst was over.

The bell did not ring again; the porter did not respond; the occupant of the lower berth seemed disposed to accept matters without further protest; and Parker had at last gained courage to sit up, carefully to connect the curtains and button them, when a hand from without suddenly spread them wider, two hands grasped the edge of the berth (as his had before), and evidently with a spring a man thrust half his body, (night attired) through upon him, narrowly escaping bumping heads with him.

Emitting an energetic, astonished ejaculation, the man disappeared, back, with the same abruptness. Parker quickly lay down; on his part, also, astonished. However, in a moment here came the man again, projecting the half of his body through, where it stayed while he scrutinized all the interior, fore and aft, a low and aloft. Parker stared at him.

"Well, you've got your nerve," vouchsafed the man, glaring. He had a red face—red, perhaps, with the exertion of sustaining himself.

Parker, by nature a timid spirit, and moreover somewhat cowed by his adventure to date, answered feebly.

"So have you," he faltered.

The occupant of the lower berth was murmuring peevishly, as if annoyed by this renewed infliction upon her repose.

"I suppose you know you're in my berth," rasped the man.

"Not at all," asserted Parker more firmly.

"Where do you think you are, then, say?"

"In upper 12, where I belong. Where do you think *you* are?" retorted Parker, growing vexed.

"I'm where you'll be in a jiffy: on the outside!" declared the man. "Did that porter put you in here?"

"He did not. I bought this berth, and paid for it, and occupy it."

"It happens, though, that I bought it and paid for it and occupied it sooner," growled the man. "Shall you come out feet-end first, or shall I pull you out on your head?"

"Neither," avowed Parker—but not confident.

"Porter! Oh, porter!" The inmate of the lower berth was again being harried by fancied peril.

"One moment, madam, and this disturbance will be over," spoke the man.

"Hi! None of that, now!" warned Parker, flattening himself against the wall of his berth, as the man reached in for him.

"Porter! Oh, porter!" The bell rang furiously and continuously.

"You get down! Go away! Blame you!" snapped Parker, evading the threatening clutch by beating it off with his fist. "And you're alarming that lady, too!"

"We'll talk about that afterward," said the man grimly. "Are you—?"

A swerve of the train upon an acute curve caught him and hurled him backward and downward, dragging a sheet with him. He landed heavily—at which Parker rejoiced.

The bell rang on, in a perfect frenzy, strident, compelling.

Parker, agonized with discomfort, cringing from the fate-imposed notoriety, drew the disarranged bedding about him, as if to efface himself. A crisis was impending. Drat that bell! He heard the man, his assailant, mumbling, bear-like. He hoped that the man was disabled—then he feared it. Ah, there was the porter, probably.

"What's the mattuh heah?"

"Some damn fool's in my berth, that's what's the matter here!"

"Porter? Is that you, porter?"

Lower 12 was speaking. "These two men are fighting over my head, porter. I won't have it. I shall complain to the president of the road."

"Yessuh. Yessum."

The porter sounded dazed; no doubt he had been asleep.

"Well! Don't stand there batting your eyes! I want that fellow out, so I can get in!"

"Yessuh. Yessuh. Jest a minute, suh."

"Humph," thought Parker.

"And I want both of them out, porter." 'Twas lower 12 again. "I'm frightened *almost* to death."

"Yessum."

"Fighting right over my head!"

Parker cowered, apprehensive. What a state of affairs for a peace-loving, inoffensive body such as he! But it was his berth, just the same! It occurred to him that he was still nightmare-ridden, and he was valiantly pinching himself to awaken, when once more a face intruded, to scan him. It was the black visage of the porter, who with rolling china orbs surveyed him.

"You'll have to get out of heah, suh. This berth done b'long to anothuh gemman."

"Not at all, George," expostulated Parker mildly. "I'm in upper twelve. It's my berth."

"You pull him out, George, or let me get at him."

"You shut up!" retorted Parker, goaded into anger. "It's my berth and I'm going to stay in it!"

"You hear me, George?"

"And so does everybody else!" interrupted a new voice. Evidently the car was waxing weary of the discussion.

"Yessuh. I'll have him out, suh."

"Fighting right over my head," moaned lower 12 hysterically. "Help! oh, help!"

"You bettuh get out, suh," persisted the porter stubbornly, addressing Parker.

Parker yielded to authority.

"All right. I'll come out for a minute, but I won't stay out," he warned, sitting up.

"Put 'em both out!" called a voice crossly.

The porter descended. Parker, keenly sensitive to his bared feet and shanks, projected them, in the orthodox fashion of upper-berthers, found the steps upon which the porter had been standing, and descended also.

"Now, by gad!" challenged the other man, thrusting him aside and planting himself on the spot.

He was quite a large man, in drab outing-flannel nightgown, he held in one hand the crumpled sheet. He glared upon Parker. The curtains shielding the lower berth parted a trifle, midway up, and the complaining female behind peeked out, examining.

"Brutes!" she vouchsafed.

Again Parker was conscious of his deficiencies in costume. He wished that the semi-obscurity were deeper. The legs of his pajamas had shrunk in the last washing. But resentment at the other man was kindled afresh by that thrust, to buoy him and stiffen his back.

"This is the othuh gemman's berth. You done made a mistake," accused the porter severely. "Whah is yoh berth?"

"Give him a berth in the insane asylum!" called a voice.

"This is section 12, isn't it?" demanded Parker.

"Yessuh."

"Then that is my berth—upper 12."

"I'd like to see you in it again!" challenged the other man, glaring. "You know me, George. You know me—"

"Yessuh."

"I turned out for a drink, and when I come back, here this runt was. Who is he, anyway?"

"Dunno, suh. Nevuh seen him befoh, suh. Whah you get on at? Le's see yoh check. Le's see yoh check; that'll settle this mattuh."

"He swallowed his check, George! Look for a strawberry mark on his left toe," directed a voice.

"Do you think I carry my check around in my pajamas?" snapped Parker.

"He ought to, George," interjected a voice. "Ought to have a check slung around his neck, with directions on it."

"Whah you get on at?"

"I got on at Luther. I bought a berth on the train, and the conductor gave me upper 12. Why, good Lord, man! I was in it half the night!"

"Nevuh bought no berth in *this* cah on the train. No, suh. This cah was full 'foh we left Denver. Nevuh bought no berth on the train foh this cah. Whah you goin'?"

"Why—ah—Kansas City." For an instant Parker was uncertain where he was going, his error, suddenly manifest, smote him with confusion.

"This ain't the Kansas City cah. This cah foh Chicago. You in the wrong cah—that's what's the mattuh with you!" proclaimed the porter, with withering assurance.

The other man snorted.

"But they were fighting right over my head," complained lower 12 querulously.

"That's more than they'll ever do over your face; so go to sleep and be thankful," rebuked a voice along the aisle wearily.

"Wretch!" gasped lower 12, falling back to subside.

"You need a guardian; that's what *you* need," asserted the other man, ascending, carrying his sheet. He crawled into his berth, grunting. His stockinged feet and the last hem of his drab nightgown vanished within. He angrily jerked the curtains together.

"Where is the Kansas City car, porter?" asked Parker humbly.

"Kansas City cah on ahead." The porter seized his steps. "If you want that cah you'd better get in it; they switch it off d'rectly, soon's we reach the junction," he admonished, departing.

Great Cæsar! And away would go clothes and all!

"Othuh way, othuh way!" corrected the porter, over his shoulder, as Parker dashed after him.

"That fellow's crazy," decreed upper 12. "He's loony."

Parker could not delay to retort; he heard the engine whistle, and turning he sped pattering up the long, chasm-like aisle, between the swaying curtains, remarks escorting him, faces deriding him.

"Thank God!"

"Good-bye, Pinkie, old boy."

"Mama! What's the matter with that man, mama?"

"Better have him searched, twelve. He's Pajama, the Porch Climber. He's carrying off your socks."

"Tra-la, Pinkie."

Defenseless, blushing even to the bald spot of his crown, Parker fled, finding sanctuary only when beyond earshot.

The vestibule platform was cold to his soles; a breeze here took advantage of his thin garments; he scurried across, and was in the next car. But there must be no more blundering. He would exercise precaution. As he halted, in the narrow passage within the door, from the smoking-room at his right issued a piggy snore, betokening the whereabouts of the porter.

The porter was lax in a corner of the leather seat, his mouth open. Parker entered to him, and shook him. In the stolid save countenance the eyes unclosed and, blood-bleared, stupid, looked up.

"Is this the Kansas City car, porter?"

"Y-essuh. Yessuh."

"All right. Where are the steps?"

"What foh?"

"I want to get back into upper 12."

The porter struggled to his feet; Parker preceded him into the passageway, and espying the steps, around the corner, lifted them and took them along. Section 12 was at the other end of the car (of course). Parker nervously threaded now this canyon aisle (stubbing his poor toes upon concealed grips). Yawning, the porter came stumbling after. Planting the steps before section 12, Parker mounted.

The curtains were buttoned high as well as low. The fact abashed Parker with a little waver of distrust. Had he buttoned them, behind him? Or

had not the porter thoughtfully buttoned them? Or was this *not* 12? Yes, it was 12. There were the figures. Determinedly he unbuttoned one button. He peeked in. Below, the porter yawned audibly, not being interested. Parker quickly withdrew his eye and precipitately backed down.

"There's a woman in there, George!" he announced, in a husky whisper.

"Yessuh."

"Did you know a woman was in there?"

"No, suh."

"But there *is!* Is there another Kansas City car on this train?"

"No, suh. Only Kansas City cah on this train, suh."

"This is section 12, surely. How did *she* get in there?"

"Dunno, suh."

The porter sleepily mounted the steps, and in blundering manner peered. He descended, yawning.

"Yessuh. Thah's a woman in thah."

"But it's my berth, George!" explained Parker, aghast.

Again he climbed up. He peeked in; the woman (it was a woman, sure enough) at the same time peeked out. Eye encountered eye.

"Sir!" In the monosyllable was volumes. Even more precipitately than before Parker retreated.

"Porter!" The bell of the summoner rang lustily.

"Yessum. Gemman made a mistake, ma'am," soothed the porter promptly.

"Well, I—should—think—he—had! The idea!"

"I beg your pardon, madam," pleaded Parker irresolutely. "But you're in my berth."

His situation was desperate.

"SIR! Porter! Who is that creature, porter?"

"Ain't she yoh wife, suh?"

"No," Parker made haste to explain.

"Wife! I should just say not!" proclaimed upper 12. "*His* wife!"

"Oh, ring off down there!" shouted a voice irritably. "We want some sleep."

This car, also, was waking.

"Gemman's made a mistake. It's all right, ma'am," soothed the porter. "Bettuh come away, suh," he admonished Parker. "Cain't have no disturbance."

"But—" protested Parker.

"Wife to a bald-headed chicken like that!" continued upper 12 scathingly—and presumably inspecting.

"Oh, take what you can get, and be happy," interjected a voice.

"Cain't have you disturbin' the whole car this way," reiterated the porter, pushing the unwilling Parker before him, and following close with the steps.

"Yes; tell your troubles to the next station agent," suggested a voice.

"All right, indeed! It's not 'all right!'" berated upper 12, with furious tones, pursuing Parker and the porter down the aisle. "We'll see, in the morning. We'll see if a lady can't travel alone in a Pullman—in a regular Pullman—at night without being insulted! You hear me, porter? 'All right!' It's *not* 'all right!'"

"But that's my berth, porter!" urged Parker, indignantly confronting that official when they had reached the sanctuary of the smoking-room.

"Guess not, suh. That thah lady's done got it."

"But—she's no business in an upper berth," complained Parker.

It struck him as an assumption—an unwarrantable assumption, that a woman should occupy an upper berth.

"Yessuh," said the porter, sinking upon the leather seat and yawning tremendously.

"And there's no other Kansas City sleeper on this train, then?"

"No, suh. Tol' you that once, suh."

The porter was wearied of the controversy.

"Upper 12; my berth is upper 12. Look here, George; you remember me? You remember me, don't you? Upper 12. I got on at Luther."

"No, suh. Don't 'member you 't all, suh. Nevuh see you befoh. You ain't in *my* cah, suh."

Humph! With one bare foot Parker

rubbed the opposite leg. He shivered. He was cold. Nobody knew him; nobody wanted him; he felt like some miserable ghost, condemned to wander. Everyone else was housed; but he had no place. Who was he?

Oh, if he could only wake up! He must belong somewhere—he must, he must! Or was this an Arabian Nights comedy, and had a mischievous jinn transported him, during slumber, from one train to another! Br-r-r-r!

"Are there any vacant berths in this car, George?" he queried.

"No, suh. Filled clear up."

"Would you mind looking? I know I'm not mistaken in my number, but it's possible, I suppose."

Parker's hand felt mechanically along the seam of his pajamas, for a pocket; but of course none was present. George was aware of that fact.

"No, suh. Tol' you this cah's filled clear up."

"But I must have a berth *some* place, George," appealed Parker, patiently.

George yawned; his eyes blinked heavily; he was most lethargic.

"Yessuh. 'Spec' you have." Again the engine whistled; George slightly roused himself. "You'd bettuh go in some cah whah you b'long, suh; 'bout to switch this one off now."

By gracious! Parker started, in alarm.

"Is there a sleeper on ahead of this one?" he demanded, with the sensations of a trapped rat.

"No, suh. Chair cah on ahead."

Chair car! He could not go fleeing through a chair car—not in pink pajamas. No! So Parker turned; and not at all unlike a pink ghost whisked in fluttering garments across the vestibuled platform, back whence he had come. Just within the threshold a great light burst upon his brain, for an instant stopping him short. By ginner! Why, certainly! What a blunder! Suddenly encouraged, he bolted on, flying through the aisle again. The porter was gathering shoes at the farther end, and him Parker recklessly re-accosted.

"Say, George!"

George, stooping and groping for shoes, glanced up.

"Look heah, you pink man," he addressed, scowling, "we-all listened to you enough. This ain't no Kansas City cah; this is Chicago cah. You go whah you b'long. They ain't nothin' of yohs in this cah 't all."

"But, George! I got mixed up. I'm not going to Kansas City; I'm bound for Chicago! Chicago's where I'm going this trip. I forgot. Usually it *is* Kansas City; but not this time. I—I spoke from force of habit."

"Holy Moses! Is Pinkie back again?" groaned a voice. "Who let him escape?"

"Well, thah ain't no room foh you in heah," grunted the porter, sullenly resuming his groping for shoes.

Parker stood smitten. At the reminder his buoyancy, so alertly acquired, as quickly oozed.

"But upper 12," he stammered. "Upper 12. You know I have upper 12, if this is the Chicago car."

"Aw, twenty-three for you," called a voice, rudely. "That's yours: twenty-three!"

"Don't know nothin' 'bout you. Ain't got no upper 12 in this cah; no, suh. G'way an' don't bothuh me," grunted the porter.

"Go 'way back an' sit down. Go back an' *lie* down. Go back in the next car; that's a Chicago car, too," directed a voice.

"Is there another Chicago sleeper on behind this one, porter?" ejaculated Parker.

"Guess thah is."

"Why didn't you say so, then!"

"Nevuh asked me. Asked me whah the Kansas City cah was, an' I tol' you," retorted the porter; and mumbled as he groped.

Parker scuttled on.

"Is he going again, George?" inquired a voice. "Lock the door after him, now, so he can't get back in, that's the ticket!"

Breathless, Parker entered the next car to the rear. At the head of the aisle there, however, he paused, hesi-

tated. The aisle was graying; morn was at hand; 'twas do or die for him now—but he must proceed slowly, although surely. He—he hoped; he dared not anticipate; he realized that he had a chance. Might—oh, might this not be his car, with his berth, at last? Parker hoped so poignantly that he almost prayed. Dawn was due, pitilessly to expose him in his pink pajamas and his cold wretchedness.

The sound of the porter polishing shoes could be heard before. A man (or was it a woman?) snored. Parker tiptoed along the canopy-draped aisle, questing. He came upon 10; he came upon 12. The curtains were not buttoned across the upper berth; they were spread a little. This was a good token—but not by any means an absolute token, Parker remembered. Parker, upon his pink knees, felt beneath the section; he drew forth a shoe—it was a feminine shoe and he thrust it back hurriedly. He shifted his search and drew forth another shoe—a masculine shoe. It was his!

Parker straightened. With one bare foot apologetically upon the edge of the

lower berth, he stretched to reconnoiter the upper—stretched farther, and still farther.

"Wait a minute, suh." The porter placed the steps for him.

"Thank you, George," said Parker mildly.

He crawled in; gradually; by hitches; reconnoitering, reconnoitering, craning, eager but apprehensive. Thus might a suspicious gopher, pink or any color, after an absence investigate his burrow.

Through the aperture betwixt the curtains passed, finally, two grimy soles. The porter bore away the steps. The curtains closed. Within, Parker continued to survey his eyrie. Above his head was hanging a hat. He reached up and removed the hat, and examined it minutely. 'Twas his hat.

With a sigh Parker slid beneath the covers and closed his eyes. The train began to slacken speed; they were pulling into the junction. Parker shuddered. He might have been in the Kansas City car, and caught! Again he sighed. He was so glad he was "at home"; and he was very tired.



## HARVESTTIDE

By Edward Wilbur Mason

THE fields of ripened wheat stretch far and wide,  
Far as the wealth of Egypt's plains of old.  
But oh, the beauty of the poppies' tide  
That runs along the mold!

The corn that crowns the distant hilltops broad  
Flames like an Aztec watch-fire in the air.  
But oh, the glory of the golden-rod  
That lights the valley fair!

The toiling reapers all day gather sheaves,  
All day their sickles in the sunlight swing.  
But oh, the lovers walking in the leaves,  
And sowing dreams of Spring!

## BALLAD OF THE DEAD QUEEN

By Archibald Sullivan

THE queen lay still on her carven bed  
(Tapers on either side).  
"Tired in white—for the queen was dead  
(In white do they robe a bride).  
What need for whispers? She will not wake,  
Nor start as they past her tread,  
Her soul went out through the marble court  
(Was ever rose so red!)

She did not go on her palfry white  
(Ah! who should see her go?)  
She sped away when the moon was bright  
(Stars in the moat below);  
She did not need the drawbridge down,  
No portals open flew.  
What need of lock, or chains, or bars?  
Her soul was passing through.

Across the moat and down the street  
(Ah! but the world is wide!)  
"Stones are hard on my naked feet,"  
The soul of the dead queen sighed.  
"I did not know what lay beyond  
The height of the castle wall;  
Oh, sad to think I had to die  
Before I saw it all!"

Only the new moon saw her pass,  
(Was ever a moon so bright?)  
The stars gleamed down on the dew-swept grass,  
(Narcissi of the night).  
The dead queen wept. "The road is rough,  
Ah, how my feet have bled!  
Now I'll go back through the sleeping town—  
Back to my carven bed."

How should her weeping maidens know  
That she should e'er come back?  
Only the new moon saw her go  
(Pearl in a well of black).  
They bore her out when the stars were pale,  
(Shrouded about was she),  
And buried her deep ere the kiss of dawn  
Silvered the greenwood tree.

Her soul came back through the quiet street  
 (Ah! but the rose was red).  
 She crossed the court with her silent feet,  
 And came to her carven bed.  
 She found it empty—her stricken cry  
 Smote to the moonless skies;  
 Only her maidens whispered low,  
 "Hark, how the night wind sighs!"

Now through the court, and through the hall  
 (Steep are the winding stairs),  
 Close to the lonely chapel wall,  
 (Hark to the chanting prayers).  
 And straight across the marble court,  
 And down the winding street,  
 The soul of the dead queen passes on,  
 With tired and bleeding feet.

And all the night, and all the day  
 (Ah! for her weary head),  
 The queen may never rest nor stay  
 Again on her carven bed.  
 And through the court where roses bloom,  
 And by the greenwood tree,  
 She passes on and weeps aloud,  
 "Where did they bury me?"



### A BRIEF ROMANCE

HE has some marked peculiarities, hasn't he?" observed the girl with the brown eyes.

"Yes, indeed," assented her friend. "Ever noticed that he has a rooted aversion to violets?"

"To violets? No."

"He has. I understand it came about in this way. A few years ago, when he was a struggling young lawyer, he fell in love with a girl who was very fond of violets, and he supplied them to an extent wholly unwarranted by his income. But after a time her love grew cold, and eventually he returned her letters. Then they found him one night with his head buried in a mass of florists' bills, many of them unreceipted. They nursed him back to life—brain fever, you know—just as in a book, only a book would take so much longer to tell the story. And he can't bear so much as the scent of violets since."

WILLIAM E. MCKENNA.



HE—Don't you like the music of children's voices?

HE—Yes, when they are not taking singing lessons.

## THE BURDEN OF HONOR

By Leila Burton Wells

**M**ISS ELYS sighed and stirred restlessly. Moving her chair further into the shadow, she stared down into the darkness below.

The night was alive with the drone of tropical insects. They lay in the long grass and clung to the branches of the trees. In a mighty procession they marched through the darkness, fireflies illuminating their way with a torch-like glory of light. Fireflies everywhere! Fireflies hanging from the tasseled heads of the bamboo-trees, fireflies fretting the cogon grass in the valley, fireflies circling round the fountain where the water dripped in a white stream to its whiter basin of stone.

Such fireflies! Miss Elys leaned her arms on the railing of the terrace and watched them in speechless admiration. They spotted the world with so enchanting and mysterious a light that she was prone to fall silent from very ecstasy. They flitted now here, now there, carrying their tiny golden lamps; fluttering, swaying, trembling; dying and being born again, in a never-ending radiance that put to shame all other illuminations in the universe.

The girl stretched out her arms as if to gather to herself some of the night's wasted sweetness. Her eyes wandered with an almost propitiatory affection over the scene before her. She had watched it so many times before, but with never quite the same eyes.

"It is so beautiful," she whispered half under her breath, "so beautiful!"

"What?" inquired the man beside her, without taking his eyes from her face, where they had rested in somber contemplation for many long moments.

She smiled.

"This!" she answered, throwing out her hands with a comprehensive gesture, "the lights, the music, the great, solemn sky—the Laguna over there like a dim silver thread, separating us from the mountains. This atmosphere that wakes the melody in your heart like a practised hand playing on the strings of a violin!" She sighed again, and drew a gauzy rainbow scarf close about her bare shoulders.

"Do you know," she continued, her words hushed a little with excess of emotion, "no matter where I am in after years, the breath of a warm Summer night will bring it all back to me. This wonderful white terrace with the lanterns trembling on their invisible wires; the palms, the flowers, the hurry of dancing feet, even the Chino boys with their bobbing pigtails and their inevitable tall glasses—oh, I love it, *love it!*"

"And yet," remarked the man, his eyes following her understandingly, "and yet you are going home!"

"Oh, yes! I am going home!"

He motioned to a boy who was passing with a waiter. "Will you have anything? A lemonade or a soda?" he asked, interrogating her with his eyes.

"Nothing, thank you!"

"What! Not even some Tan San?"

She smiled. "Well, perhaps. Tell him to put in lots of ice!"

She leaned back in her deep wicker chair and stirred the air indolently with a sandalwood fan.

The quaint light from a Chinese balloon lantern fell over her face and figure and touched her slender arms

where they stretched bare and round along the rough wicker.

Her cheek had that bleached pathetic pallor peculiar to white women in the tropics, and there were little blue shadows under her eyes; but she was lovely, with a beauty which had no dependence on flesh or color.

It lay perhaps in the haunting charm of her smile, the slow, rhythmical grace of her movements, the coquettish and wholly fascinating use of her beautiful eyes; or—who can say?—perhaps in something beyond and behind all these.

Fenton was watching her with strange, harassed irritation.

At times he despised the power she possessed over him; for he was a strong man who had little liking for a woman's domination. Yet as he studied her almost ethereal face he had an uncontrollable desire to force her, for one unforgettable moment, to look into his eyes and acknowledge the truth. He told himself that for that one moment he would suffer purgatories in the days to come; but his love for her had bred in him so great and wholesome a fear of her displeasure that he hesitated—and the little Chino boy reappeared, and, approaching the table, laid down his tray.

Fenton signed the check and slowly poured the sparkling water into the glass. His hand shook and his mouth twitched convulsively at the corners. He had been so near—

She lifted her hand and took the glass from him, sipping the water slowly.

He knew that she must be conscious of his eyes, but there was nothing in her slow, indolent movements to confirm his suspicions. Thinking back, he remembered that he had never seen her self-possession startled. She was as exquisitely tempered as true steel.

The last couples had left the terrace for the hop room and, through the long French windows, they passed and re-passed in the whirl of the dance.

The music rose and crept sobbing into the night, cloyingly sweet, and out over the Laguna the moon rose from her bed of clouds like a great

pale ghost. All the world about her was clothed in silver: the clouds were fringed in it, the mountains were steeped in it, and the water was washed in it—solemn, silent, luminous silver.

The stars had grown paler and the fireflies were going to sleep, when suddenly the world was very still, and she turned to him and for one long moment looked into his eyes.

"You can say it," she whispered, and her voice was so low that for a moment he almost doubted whether she had spoken.

The laces on her bosom trembled, and a slow, hot flush crept up to her cheeks, but she did not move her eyes.

"You know?" he cried, the words leaping out into the quiet night in their hurry to be gone. "Laura!"

For an instant that strange, haunting smile touched her lips; then she trembled, too, and clenched the scarf in her lap with nervous fingers.

"You have told me so many times," she breathed, her voice faltering. "Oh, how could I *help* knowing? A man can never hide it. Why, he hardly tries!"

Fenton leaned his arms on the table between them and stared at her in silent wonder.

"And I was so proud of not having spoken," he said slowly.

She looked at him again with an unexplainable radiance on her face.

"I knew that first day."

"Then why—?" His voice was accusing.

She leaned suddenly forward and clasped her hands together with a quick, passionate gesture totally unlike herself.

"Why? Because I am selfish—no, do not interrupt. Because I wanted your—love. Not for the love's sake—I have had too much of that," with a little weary smile, "but because I saw in you an intangible something that supplied the want here," putting her hands on her breast. "You were what I had groped for all my life. We are all of us incomplete until we find," after a moment's tremulous hesitation, "our mate. No, no, wait—I must speak

now, for I will never speak again. Had it been a little time before—such a little time—we would have found each other, you and I. "Oh," brushing back the dark hair from her brow, "I have gone over it so many times! I have wanted to be weak and dishonorable so many times; but something tells me we cannot build happiness on the misery of others. I have made my choice and I must abide by it!"

Her voice died away and she turned her face from him, so that he could see only the curve of her throat and the massed darkness of her hair, crowned with its wreath of waxen gardenias.

The faint Oriental odor of the sandal-wood fan swept its perfume toward him. She associated herself with all the sweet and rare things of his life.

For him a beautiful sunset had her head cut out against it like a cameo. In a strain of divine music he heard the soft, halting accents of her voice caressing the words she dropped from her lips. In an uplifted thought he saw a reflection of her dauntless soul. She walked beside him in mystical harmony, guiding him, strengthening him, comforting him. He had never been able to think of her as belonging to anyone else. She was his, his . . .

He watched her now, a cold, blank terror settling over him. He had prayed for this moment. He had asked that it might be vouchsafed him that she know; and she knew, and he found that knowledge was the bitterest pang of all.

The veriest beggar has one divine treasure that man cannot wrest from him—hope. In his darkest moment she flits before him, holding out golden promises. She finds portents of joy in the blackest disaster; she illuminates the interminable night with a shaft of effulgent light.

Fenton had lost hope.

In one never-to-be-regained moment he had seen his castles tumbling at his feet. He scarcely knew what he had hoped for, to what broken straw he had clung. He only knew that he sat no farther from her than the length of his arm, yet she would never belong

to him. Honor held her. He had not thought that women cared much about honor.

He found his voice somewhere and was surprised to find it unchanged. He asked quietly:

"You will marry him, then?"

She bent her head in silent acquiescence without turning toward him.

He gripped the table with his hands in unconscious strength.

"I wonder," he said slowly, "if he realizes the value of the gift he is receiving?"

Again that illusive smile. She turned her eyes so that they rested again on his face.

"He cares for me more than anything else in the world," she said quietly, "excepting his profession. He thinks he puts me first!"

"He is a great soldier," admitted Fenton with ungrudging admiration. "He will go far—"

"Yes," listlessly, "and I will walk beside him, sharing his honors. That is my portion. Oh!" she shivered slightly, "I am already beginning to feel the burden. Do you know," leaning forward excitedly, "that in going off tonight on this expedition to Leyte—to danger, perhaps death—he is all soldier. He has forgotten that he was ever a lover. I am pushed out of his life. He is swallowed up in his greed for glory. He wants me to wait for him tonight as he marches by, but do you know if I were not there he would not miss me?"

"Why do you marry him, then?" asked Fenton almost sullenly.

"Why?" She arose from the chair and going closer to the balcony railing stared out into the night. "Why?" She put her hands to her eyes and pressed the lids down hard, as if she would shut out some hateful sight. "It is so easy to ask why, and so hard to answer. Perhaps I am pitiful enough to be afraid of public opinion. He is a very brilliant man and I am just—an average girl. I have nothing except my good looks, and they," with a little contemptuous smile, "are going fast over here, while he—he is

everything a man should be. Do you know there would be something almost grotesque about my throwing him over?"

"Why do you stop?"

A faint smile touched her lips.

"I was only pausing for breath. Don't be afraid; you shall have all the reasons." She came back to her chair and, leaning her arms on the tall wicker back, sunk her chin into her soft, curled palms. "I believe," she said reflectively, "that under all my show of bravery I am an arrant coward, after all. I am disgracefully afraid of consequences. Circumstances have been against me from first to last. Why, for instance, when I was passively contented with my lot, should *you* have come into my life? I had known nothing finer than his love until then. I was happy with my cheap imitation, for I did not *know*; but now," she flung out her hands desperately, "nothing seems worth attaining. I have been walking in the clouds and naturally the earth seems rough to my feet. I wanted to tell you all this, for we have come so near that our spirits must have touched. Our lives are not embittered for knowing and I am not disloyal to him, for see—how far we are apart—you and I!" She studied for a moment the velvet sky above her. "I wonder," she questioned, "if, beyond those stars, there is a correction for all our mistakes? Whether we will be compensated there for what we have lost here?"

He made no answer, and she went on, her voice halting now and then with a little catch as if she sobbed.

"Honor," she said, turning the word over as if she marveled at it. "Honor! such a little thing and yet big enough to spoil two lives." Her eyes narrowed. "If he were not going into the field," she said reflectively, "if he were a little less than what he is, I might—"

She covered her face with her hands.

"Oh!" she wailed, with a stifled sob, "it is bitter to be tempted. Don't tempt me!"

He arose suddenly and coming around to where she stood, took her hands from her face and held them in his closely, passionately.

"Look at me, Laura!" he said.

The dark crest of her head was dropped so that it almost touched his white coat, but as he spoke she raised it proudly and with her face white as the flowers in her hair, stared into his eyes.

So for moments they stood, and the wail of the music was as the cry of a lost soul. The heavy perfume of the gardenias in her hair enveloped them, and she swayed a little, but her eyes did not falter. In them he read more than it is often given man to read. He saw her heart unfolding like a sun-kissed flower at his touch, and he knew that it would close again forever when he released her eyes.

For a moment more he held them; then he bent his head and pressed with his lips the fluttering scarf where it covered her bare shoulder. His face was cold, and very white.

She put out her hand as if to touch him, but at that moment the music ceased and the dancers streamed out from the ball-room.

Someone sought her out and she heard herself laughing and coqueting in a dumb, lifeless fashion. A strange lethargy seemed to have fallen upon her. She heard Fenton excuse himself and drift away. She heard the music—the laughter.

She pressed her arm cruelly against the chair that the wicker might bruise the soft flesh. She must feel. She would.

Her partner came for the dance and she went inside and danced. She danced all through the evening, but only when her escort wrapped her heavy mandarin coat about her and she went out into the night, did she seem to regain control of her senses.

She stepped into the victoria with a feeling of relief and the little Filipino ponies scurried away into the darkness, their manes dancing and harness jingling. She leaned back against the soft cushions, half-closing her eyes.

"Are you tired?"

"Yes!"

She turned from the man beside her with tortured petulance.

"Are you going to wait up to see the troops march out?" he asked casually. "Marshall goes in command, doesn't he?"

"Yes!"

"How does he like leaving the joys of McKinley for grim-visaged war?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He is a soldier," she replied laconically.

"And—a lover!"

She smiled.

"So they say!"

There was an expression of unfeigned weariness in her face as the cochero drew the ponies in at the curb.

"Here we are," she announced, quickly stepping out of the victoria. She stood alone on the pavement. He jumped out beside her.

"Shall I send the ponies home? I am not going in to Manila tonight. The colonel has asked me to stay with him!"

She nodded to the cochero. "You can go, Antonio!"

The white moonlight fell full upon her gorgeous gold-embroidered cloak and on her small flower-crowned head.

"Good night," she said, holding out her hand with a gesture of dismissal, and moving toward the vine-covered porch.

He took the hand warmly.

"Good night and thank you! Will you ride with me tomorrow if I can get a mount?"

She shook her head.

"I don't think I will feel quite up to it in the morning," she said gently.

He laughed.

"I suppose one must not ask why?"

She gave him a fine, cold smile.

"Perhaps it would be wiser not to!"

*Adios!*"

"Good night!"

She stood watching him as he strode down the line—a tall, white-uniformed figure. Then, with a little shiver, she gathered up her draperies and trailed slowly up the steps.

The porch was spotted with moonlight and hung with orchid baskets. There was a faint hint of their unearthly odor, and a sweeter fragrance from some jasmine blossoms in pots in the windows. The wicker chairs stretched inviting arms outward, and the native hammocks swayed a little in the breeze.

The girl, stepping softly, went inside, and, lighting a candle lamp, held it close to the face of a little clock on the desk. Half-past one! They were to march at two. Only a half-hour more.

She extinguished her light and stepped out into the porch again. How still it was—how peaceful!

She sank slowly into a long chair and closed her eyes, her tired brain refusing to seek rest with her body.

There were so many things to think of. In looking back, she wondered how she had been so willing to engage herself to Marshall, and in the light of later developments it seemed as if it must have been the reputation and not the man she had loved.

The six months of her engagement had filled her with misgivings, for she had found her lover like many another great man—arrogant, irritable and intolerably self-opinionated. Her attitude toward him in private had come to resemble a mother's indulgence toward a spoiled child, and yet she had not been dissatisfied until Fenton came; so surely is value proportioned by comparison.

She sighed and stirred a little in her long chair. She knew that she had no right to rebel against her fate, and yet she was rebelling most bitterly.

"If he were not going into the field," she said, unconsciously speaking aloud, "I would—I might—"

"You might what?" asked a man's voice out of the darkness, and the girl started and raised herself from her chair.

She put her hand with a little defensive gesture to her heart as if she would shield it from the gaze of the onlooker. Her face grew paler, and she stepped more into the light, as if to meet the speaker who was coming hastily up to the porch.

Major Marshall was a young man in spite of the golden leaf on his shoulder-straps. He moved with a decision and energy as if he were used to command. He was magnificently made and put together and wore his khaki service uniform with much grace.

Miss Elys looked at him a moment in silence, her words to Fenton recurring: "There would be something grotesque in my throwing over such a man." She sighed. He was outwardly too big.

"What were you saying as I came up?" Marshall asked, as with a possessive gesture he took her in his arms. "I thought at first there was someone with you!"

She shook her head and put her hands on his chest to free herself. For a moment she felt as if she must speak, as if she must open her mouth and shout the truth to high heaven; but the impulse passed. It would be worse than brutal to wound him at such a time. She had not the right. She smiled faintly, twisting one of the big bronze eagle buttons on his coat in her fingers, with a charming if illusive intimacy.

"There was no one here!" she replied guardedly, answering only the last half of his sentence. "I came home before the dance was over and have been sitting here waiting. I saved your dances, but you did not come for them," a slight rebellious coquetry in her eyes.

"I could not get away," explained Marshall hurriedly. "There was so much to do. I have been rushed to death, and only have a moment now—"

He took her face in his two hands and stared at it long in silence.

"Don't forget me," he said in a low, stirred tone. "Think of me always, and if I don't come home—"

She put a quick, protesting hand over his lips.

"If I don't come home," kissing the soft fingers, "I want them to bring me back here," staring for a moment up at the still starlit heavens, "and put me to rest where the sun will always shine. Will you remember?"

He laughed quickly, almost boisterously. "I will either bring you home new honors," he cried with boastful confidence, "or they will bring me home wrapped in the flag. Honor or death is my motto—"

He paused suddenly. "Why, how pale you are! I am talking, dear! There—smile! What do you want from Leyte? Some mats, or bolos, or both? To tell you the truth, I have a premonition that this scrap is not going to amount to much. They are afraid of me, you know. The little devils—"

He looked so bold and daring and omnipotent as he spoke that the blood flamed in her cheek. Ah! he was a man!

She lifted her face to his.

"And you love me?" she asked wonderingly, as if she doubted. "Tell me again: Would it matter so very much—if you lost me?"

He caught her in his arms with quick, protective passion.

"I would be robbed of my eyesight sooner," he cried, lifting his proud head as if he were already facing an enemy. "If I lost you? Why, I could not lose you! Are you not mine? My—own?" pressing her head against him. "I am no more afraid of losing you than of losing my battalion under fire. An enemy would have to reckon with me first, and they are afraid," laughing. "Do you hear? Beloved, they are afraid—all of them."

A strange light had grown on his face and she shrank before it. He had forgotten her and already his blood was pounding to the tune of battle. She drew her scarf closer about her bare throat.

"There is the bugle," she said indistinctly. "The battalion is forming! You must go!"

He strained her to him.

"Will you watch us march by?" he asked her. "It is good night and good-bye—sweetheart, sweetheart."

He turned toward the steps and then came back.

"You will be waiting for me when I come home?" he asked, and some of

the old assurance had gone from his voice.

"Yes!"

"And you will not forget?"

"They will not let me," archly. "You are too much of a hero. The papers will remember. Go now—you must!"

"Yes! Good-bye!"

Once more he kissed her white face and then, staring at it as if he had seen it for the first time, he stammered half under his breath, his voice shaking with passion: "How beautiful you are, Laura; Laura, how beautiful you are!"

She shrank from him with a little embarrassed laugh and half-pushed him down the steps.

"When you begin to pay compliments," she cried nervously, "you must go. Oh, you great, big boy! It is only my looks, after all!"

He kissed her bare hands.

"I love your beauty because it belongs to you," he said with passionate fervor; and then, "good-bye!"

She stood watching him as he strode off into the darkness, her hands pressed to her cheeks. A great burning flush had crept over her face and throat. She was trembling under his kisses. Yet why had she been such a coward? Why had she not spoken? Anything was better than his pitiful ignorance, his confident, possessive tenderness.

She went forward to the edge of the porch and gripped the railing with her hands, staring into the parade ground, where the lantern lights were twinkling and she could hear Marshall's voice giving the commands.

"Squads right! March! Full step! Companies, column right! March! Guide right!"

She stared with widened eyes at the moving figures as they stepped out into the misty moonlight with military precision, their packs upon their shoulders, their equipments jingling, their faces turned dauntlessly to the front. They were going to fight for their country. All that they knew of life was duty and death.

The girl trembled as she looked.

Duty? What was her duty? Which way did it lie?

She went forward and seated herself on the steps, where the moonlight could find her and shine upon her upraised face.

She pushed her golden cloak further away from her throat and leaned back against the pillar of the porch.

There was a reluctant coquetry in the action. She wanted him to remember the best of her—her beauty. It was all she had given him or could give.

The battalion had reached the road and was marching slowly down in front of the officers' quarters. White-gowned forms sprang like spirits from the shadows, and tear-choked voices called out with forced cheer. The night was suddenly vitalized with emotion as that intrepid band passed on its way.

Marshall was walking ahead, his magnificent shoulders thrown back, his face exultantly lifted. He was an inspiring figure, and as he came toward her the girl suddenly arose to her feet and pressed forward.

"Good-bye!" she cried, her voice rushing like overcharged music from her lips. "Oh, good-bye!"

For one moment their eyes met as he passed, and then with a very white face, he lifted his hat—and was gone.

She stood for a moment listening to the steady tread of marching feet.

"Be true," they seemed to say to her. "Be true—be true . . ."

She listened for moments—hours, perhaps; then, with passionate gesture, she covered her face with her hands and crept into the darkness beyond.

For days afterward she seemed to hear those rhythmic feet marching, and that haunting refrain, "Be true!"

Had she been true? Her mind was a tangle of chaotic emotions. She seemed to be forever struggling toward a conclusion which she never reached.

She saw Fenton often in those days, for he was not to be denied. He came to her strengthened with hope and full of the righteousness of love.

"Happiness is your right," he repeated again and again, "yours and

mine! When you rob us of it you are committing a crime! When you marry that man, feeling as you do toward me, you are committing an act that is worse than dishonor! How dare you offer him a life without love?"

"A life without love!" She examined it from every side and shrank back with wide, terror-stricken eyes. "I am afraid," she repeated over and over to herself. "I am afraid— If I were not so young I could face it—but oh, the long, long years!"

In these days she avoided the outside world. She had never made a confidante of her mother and she did not turn to her now. Mrs. Elys was a nervous, shallow little creature, with a mind as narrow as a knife-blade and a soul filled with a great and awful reverence for things of the world, worldly.

She loved her daughter only because she was beautiful, and would have accorded her scant attention had she been cursed with an unlovely face.

Laura came to know in those days that there is comfort and a little peace in self-sacrifice. She had no one to tell her, but from the depths of her own nature she dragged a few great truths and sorted them out. She was determined to work out her own salvation. As she saw it, duty and suffering lay on one side, and passion and pleasure on the other. As she turned now her life would be hereafter. She hesitated before the issue. It is difficult to make decisions in youth; in age, duty bears a more friendly face, and pleasure drained to the dregs offers small allurement.

To Laura, struggling against her own desires, the renunciation of love was tragically terrible. It was not given to her to know that the bitterness would pass, that in all things—only excepting death—there are compensations.

She made her decision slowly, but she accepted it royally. With what strength she had, she put Fenton out of her mind and turned toward the future that was hers.

"It is quite useless," she wrote him, "to struggle with me. Though I die a

slow death day by day, I will keep my faith with him. He has my word and it must remain good. When he comes home I will tell him the truth, and then if he will release me— Ah! I dare not think of it. You must not come again, for it but gives me pain and makes my way harder. Because of your love be gentle with me!"

She suffered perhaps more in sending the letter than Fenton did in receiving it, but he obeyed her commands and she began to try to live without him. She had not known how hard it would be.

She received a few short notes from the field, mostly full of military details. When Marshall spoke of love he spoke with passion, but his life was crowded with larger things. There was trouble, plenty of it, and he had lost some men.

Strange as it may seem, Laura at this time had no apprehensions. To her, her lover bore a charmed life. She had something of his own reckless, defiant spirit, and she could not fancy even death conquering him.

When the blow came it found her unprepared.

The telegram in the paper that morning was pitifully brief. It said only, "Major Marshall and entire detachment wiped out."

*Major Marshall and entire detachment wiped out.*

The girl repeated the words in a whisper, an awful pallor spreading over her face.

Her mother came into the room as she sat there dumb with terror, and passed her to seat herself at the other side of the breakfast-table.

Laura held out the paper in speechless awe. Her lips moved, but no sound came.

"What is it?" Mrs. Elys sprang from her chair, her voice bursting into the silence shrill with fear. "Laura! What is it? Can't you speak?"

"Look!"

"Look at what? Why don't you tell me?" frantically. "Do you want to frighten me to death? Your father—?"

"It is not father!"

Mrs. Elys cried out again:  
"Leigh, then?"

"Yes!"

"No! No! Oh, *no!*"

"Yes!"

"Laura!"

"Hush! It does not say much. It may not be true!"

"Oh, my poor child!"

The girl sprang to her feet as her mother came toward her and thrust out her hands as if to ward off something unbearable.

"Don't touch me! Don't!" she cried passionately. "Let me alone! I *will* be alone," tearing herself away from the importuning arms. "Oh, don't you *see!*"

Mrs. Elys began to sob and wring her hands together.

"If your father were only here!" she wailed. "He never *is* where he is wanted. I always have to bear the brunt of things alone."

Laura paused a moment at the doorway of her room, her face white and still.

"Will you telephone to the Cable News and find out if—if—it is true? Mother, mother, *please* find out if it is true!"

There was something pitiful in the suppressed agony in her voice. She repeated the words over and over: "Find out if it is true! It can't be true, it can't—!"

Through the long, tortuous days that followed, her girlhood slipped from her. She lived through a very agony of self-accusation. It seemed as if she had been unduly punished for the treachery of her thoughts, yet she had decided and her decision had been all for him.

In his death he came nearer to her than he had ever come in life, yet she was dry-eyed.

He was to be buried in the islands as he had wished, and she, being the only one close to him, seemed for days to walk hand in hand with death. She bore sympathy and condolences and prying curiosity with the same cruel calm. She listened to praises of the dead, saw listlessly the honors heaped

upon him when they brought him home.

"Oh, my dear," some woman had cried sobbingly, "it is worth *all* to have been loved by such a man. Nothing can take that from you—that, and his memory, which are yours to cherish. Your life will be one long prayer of consecration. It was your lot to have been loved by a great man. Let that comfort you!"

Laura shivered.

It seemed that she knew nothing in those days but his greatness, and the burden of it. They were binding her to him with bands of iron.

Her mother had tried to spare her the ordeal of the funeral, but she protested. He must have all honor. So through the hot sunshine that he had loved, he was borne along the green road to the little plot beyond the post that in the days to come would house many eternal sleepers, but now was almost uninhabited.

The sky stretched overhead, a ceiling of pure breathless blue, and beneath it in the sunlit grass they had hollowed a grave—a grave that would house a pauper or a hero with equal friendliness; for the great man may claim no more room in his last sleeping than the most miserable vagabond that encumbers the earth. Nature demolishes the distinctions that men make.

Slowly to the solemn roll of the muffled drums they carried him past the places where he had lived, up the curving hill, wrapped in his gorgeous pall, the Stars and Stripes lying motionless over his once turbulent heart.

For him the hurry of battle was done. The sound of guns or the tread of marching feet would not wake him, or the voice of love disturb him. He had received a soldier's portion and was content. What mattered it that his body had been hacked by savage hands? The flag that he loved hid the wounds and it would flutter eternally over his green bed. Life could not have held for him the sweetness of death.

So they laid him softly down in the sunshine, and fired over him the final

volley that even in paradise he would want to hear, and out into the infinite they sent the clear notes of the bugle-call that had so often called him into strife.

Laura trembled as she heard them. Every clod of earth flung on that unresisting coffin seemed to fall upon her own breast. It was as if she were being buried inch by inch.

A feeling of suffocation overpowered her.

Would she be unable to separate herself from him in death even as she had not been able to do in life?

She was struggling like a captured bird. Why did they all stare at her? Why did they pity her so? If they but knew! She wanted to get out of the sunshine into the darkness where she could think.

In after years she looked back upon the month that followed Marshall's death as the most awful of her life. Everything conspired to make the days hideous to her. She had one short note from Fenton and the gift of many flowers that came anonymously, yet brought their message of sympathy. There was no need to tell the donor; her heart answered to but one name and that name she never spoke.

In those days the world refused her any joy. If she appeared, voices were hushed and faces saddened. Even men who had deemed her lightest word law feared to approach her now. Her grief separated her from her kind, and the world hurried fiercely along looking for laughter.

The long, hot days piled one upon the other, and it seemed as if she must go mad from their very monotony. Her mother's attitude especially harassed her, for it was one of unrelenting, lugubrious woe. The house became a miniature stage in which a tragedy of mourning was continually in progress, each actor being letter-perfect in the part assigned him by an untiring stage-manager.

It was at this period that the much mooted question of the fortune that Marshall had left was thrust forward for the hundredth time.

July, 1907-8

"It is useless to discuss it," Laura had repeated wearily, "quite useless. I will *not* accept the money, mother. All the words in the world will not alter my decision. Why go over it again? It only causes dissension."

Mrs. Elys's lips set in a fine, hard line. She moved nervously around the room, touching first one article and then another. From under her lashes she furtively observed her daughter.

Laura lay back in a long Bilibid chair by the window, a magazine half opened on her lap, and a faint, hot breeze stirring the hair on her temples. She was paler and more ethereal than she had been, but there was a finer quality to her beauty. Her eyes were fixed on her mother and there was in them a quiet and unalterable determination.

"You are so unreasonable," whimpered Mrs. Elys, her small face twitching perilously, "so like your father—stubborn as the day is long. You would rather see me slaving in the departments in my old age than to accept the little comfort this money would ensure. Why do you hesitate? You would have had a right to it had you been his wife, and you were almost that. What actuates you?"

She came close to the girl and stood looking down upon her in a narrow-eyed rebellion, her whole, small, dwarfed soul baring itself in her expression. It was as if she were appraising some valuable animal, whose price was marred by its uncertain temper.

"I could understand this show of fine feeling," she continued sarcastically when the girl did not speak, "if you would appear to more advantage in the eyes of the world."

Laura lifted her heavy lids.

"I do not care how I appear in the eyes of the world," she said coldly.

"Then what *do* you care for?" impatiently.

The girl lifted her shoulders ever so little, but made no reply.

The color flamed into her mother's face.

"Perhaps your father can reason

with you," she threatened in a belligerent voice. "Perhaps *he* can make you know right from wrong."

"I already know right from wrong." Laura suddenly rose, the magazine dropping unheeded to the floor. "I say now, mother, and I shall say while there is breath in my body, I will not accept one penny of this money. Why, you ask? Well, you shall know that, too—all of it! I am tired of shams and pretenses. I intend from now on to be an individual, not a puppet. You ask me why I will not accept this money? Because I did not love the man who left it to me; because I have no moral right to it! It was bequeathed to me under a misapprehension, and I have drifted into an acceptance of it because I was ashamed of public opinion. I have been living a lie these last few months. I have been afraid of what people would say. I have let you hang me with the weeds of your own making and drown me with your tears and lamentations. I have listened to the hypocritical words you have put in my mouth and been silent; but it is time now, mother, that you and I understand each other. I sacrificed myself to Leigh in his life and I will not be buried in his grave. He died a soldier's death and had the honors that he craved, and now," passionately, "you want to crucify my poor, pitiful, protesting body on the cross of his memory. For me there must be no sunshine, no joy, no love. I must not look to the future, for I have nothing but a past, and that past darkened with pain and death. I tell you I will not endure it. I am young and strong and full of life and you would have me live an eternal death, but I will not—no, though all the world should rise up and defame my name. You envy those poor creatures who are loved by men whom the world calls great. I commiserate them, for their lives are only altars of sacrifice on which to burn the incense of adulation that the world reserves for its heroes. If I had loved Leigh it would have been different, but I did not—I did not. For a year I have been a slave

to my promise and, if he had lived, I might still have been; but oh, mother, it is to someone else that all my heart cries out. I gave him up once. Let me be happy now. Don't rob me, now that I have the right to love!"

She stretched out longing hands and leaned forward as if to plead, but her mother pushed her away with a gesture of repulsion.

"How dare you talk so?" she panted. "How dare you, when he lies up there forgotten? Oh, I am ashamed to look you in the face—you faithless, perverted woman! Is it for this that I suffered to bring you into the world—that I denied myself—that I—? Oh, what will people say? What will they say?"

"Hush!" Laura held up a warning hand. "There is someone coming up the steps," she breathed in a whisper.

Mrs. Elys instantly composed her face, removing all passion from it as one removes the slide from a magic-lantern. Her eyes assumed their wonted, ferret-like eagerness. She stepped softly through the long window to the porch beyond.

"Tell Mariano to go," she said in a whisper. "Oh, there he is now. Mariano! How slow you are," petulantly, as the boy appeared at the window. "There is someone at the door. If it is an orderly, say that the major is at headquarters, and if it is a visitor find out the name and let me know."

Gathering up her white draperies, she tiptoed out of earshot, and Laura, picking up her book, followed her. When they reached the vine-covered alcove they paused and measured each other with volcanic eyes. Neither spoke, until, the little Filipino boy returning, Mrs. Elys began interrogating him with subdued petulance.

"Who is it, Mariano? A visitor? What a time to call! Well?" with a rising inflection.

"It is the Teniente Fenton."

"Mr. Fenton!"

"He lik-ka to see the señorita."

"Impossible!" Mrs. Elys's face at once assumed an expression of well-simulated distress.

"Tell Mr. Fenton that the señorita is *very* sorry, but that she is quite prostrated and receives no one! Do you understand? No one—prostrated!"

She began to repeat the message hastily in Spanish when, "Wait!" Laura's voice rang out, strident with command.

"Hush! he will hear you."

"It makes no difference. I want him to hear me. The end might as well come now as later. My life is my own, mother, and I *will* live it!"

She drew herself up and towered above the other woman, speaking as one who had authority.

Their glances met and clashed and then, with an abandoned gesture, the girl flung out her arms as if she dropped from her hesitation and indecision and vacillation.

"Tell Mr. Fenton," she cried passionately, "that I will see him immediately, immediately. Or—wait!" She brushed away her mother's detaining hands and lifted her face, on which a strange, sweet radiance had been born. "I think," she said faintly, a hot flush creeping to her very eyes, "I think that I will go myself! Oh, mother, do not stop me, for I have wanted to go so long!"



## MY LADY SUFFRAGETTE

By Barbara Wyeth

**M**Y Lady's nose is Grecian born,  
Though sometimes, when a-tilt with scorn,  
A strain of Celtic shows;  
And when I beg her for a kiss,  
Most Romanly severe it is;  
They make me feel I've done amiss—  
My Lady's "Noes!"

My Lady's cheek is smooth and white  
And dimples, to my raptured sight,  
There play at hide-and-seek;  
But when my love I warmly press  
For quite the hundredth time—not less—  
She says, "You do? I didn't guess!"  
My Lady's cheek!

My Lady's eyes are wide and blue,  
An index clear of all the true,  
Sweet grace that in her lies;  
And some day she will drop the mask;  
And, finis sweet to lover's task,  
They'll give consent to all I ask—  
My Lady's "Ayes!"

# THE DISCARDED FETISH

A ROMANCE OF THE MISSOURI

By John G. Neihardt

## I

### THE COMING OF MR. WATERS

ST. LOUIS, JUNE 3, '62.

TO JAMES SIMPSON, ESQ.  
Editor *Trumpet*,  
Fort Calhoun, Nebraska Territory.

DEAR JIM:

The man who will hand you this note goes by the name of Mr. Waters, which will, as I firmly believe from reputation and appearances, prove to be a misnomer. I commend him to you for three reasons: first, because of his wooden leg; second, because of his blind eye; third, because he says he is a printer. I think it was a printer you asked me to send you. I found him down at the river landing, busy in maintaining a prone attitude and industriously sunning himself. Mr. Simpson, I take pleasure in presenting to you Mr. Waters.

Yours, etc.,

J. C.

Mr. James Simpson, editor and proprietor of the Fort Calhoun *Trumpet*, read this introductory note with conflicting emotions. He scowled and smiled alternately. The sight of the familiar scrawl of his friend, exciting, as it did, memories of old-time friendship, could not quite overcome the irritation caused by the light manner in which the serious predicament of Mr. Simpson seemed to have been treated.

In all the long line of the followers of Gutenberg, Mr. Simpson felt distinguished as the only Job of the pro-

fession. During the issuance of six weekly editions of the *Trumpet* he had employed half as many printers. Each had come, contracted the war fever and gone—swallowed up by the great angry cloud in the East. As a result the erstwhile strident *Trumpet* had degenerated rapidly to the station of a child's whistle—a thing of faintness and caprice.

It was for this reason that Mr. Simpson had despatched an appealing letter to his friend in St. Louis, asking that he send not simply a printer, but a printer with unique qualifications. "Send me a printer," he had written, "who is physically disabled for military service in some insuperable manner."

Mr. Simpson looked up from the letter of introduction with a scowl hanging heavily upon his brow, and fixed a pair of narrowed and bitterly scrutinizing eyes upon the face of Mr. Waters. He saw a man near thirty-five years of age, of medium height, with a pair of broad shoulders, drooped with habits of slouchiness, from which a threadbare coat hung like a visible joke. His head was large, shaped for intelligence, and covered with a heavy tangled growth of yellow hair that gave every indication of curls should it ever be encouraged with a washing. The sun-faded ends of his locks nestled affectionately about his ears. His face was shaped for expressions of kindness, but its many lines of past emotion made it bewildering.

The man had but one eye.

A pitiful growth of short sandy hair straggled down his cheeks and flared up into the semblance of a dying flame

where the scrubby mustache gathered in bristles above a sensitive mouth, quivering at the corners and with lips dried and parched as with long use of stimulants.

As the critical and somewhat disapproving gaze of the editor traveled from the crown of the man's head down across the shabby face, tanned throat, ragged shirt, buttonless coat and trousers drawn askew by defective suspenders, he discovered for the first time that the description of his friend was not wanting with regard to the one leg, the left, which was supplied from the knee with a battered, iron-shod wooden stump, now nervously beating time on the floor to some careless tune in its owner's head.

When Mr. Simpson's eyes had completed the downward tour of inspection, they began the return trip toward the man's face, renoting the appearance of the applicant with the least expression of doubt, that rapidly changed as the visual ascent continued, and finally softened into a quiet twinkle of mirth as they reached the level of the man's anxious eye.

"Ever set any type?"

"Quite a considerable," replied Mr. Waters.

"All right," said the editor, "I'll try you."

Mr. Simpson, being a man of much dignity and few words, took a sheet of copy from the hook, handed it to the new typesetter and motioned him toward an empty stool which sat before the rickety cases, at which a bare-footed, freckle-faced, frowsel-headed boy of about twelve years laboriously clicked type into a stick with many painful gyrations of mouth and much wriggling of toes nervous with enormous responsibility.

As Waters stumped toward the cases, the boy rested his unfinished stick upon his case and stared curiously into the single eye of the newly hired. For a moment expressions of doubt chased themselves among the freckles of the boy's face. Then the man's eye twinkled kindly, and he smiled. The smile was a halo that spread and glori-

fied his face. Immediately the boy responded with an honest, mouth-stretching grin, accompanied by a simpering elongation of the eyes, that gave his face the bland expression of a peaceful cat dreaming in the sun.

Still smiling, Waters climbed upon his stool, hooked his wooden leg among the rounds, and with the dexterity of one who is happy with the consciousness of friendship, ran his eye down the copy of a pompous war editorial, and the room was filled with the antiphony of clicking type.

## II

### THE CRIME OF THE ZODIAC

DURING the second week of Waters's employment, Mr. Simpson announced that he would be away several days, stating that business necessitated a trip to Omaha City, a distance of some twenty-five miles down the Missouri River. The deportment of the new foreman during the previous week had been so satisfactory that the editor felt safe in leaving him in charge of the *Trumpet*.

For some time after the departure of Mr. Simpson on a southbound packet Waters and the boy sat silently at their cases. Finally laying down his stick, Waters turned his monocular gaze upon the boy.

"What'd you say your name was?"

"Henry Sprangs."

"Would you mind bein' called Specks?"

"Huh-uh," replied the boy, shaking his head negatively and simpering good-natured assent.

"Well," said the foreman, "when I first lay my eye onto you, I says, 'That chap'd ought to be named Specks.' No harm meant, you know."

With a spasmodic industry, partly caused by sudden bashfulness, the two fell violently to sticking type-metal. Suddenly the man again laid down his stick.

"Well, you see," he said, with a comic seriousness in his eye, "I said this way, 'Mebbe Specks and me could be cronies.'

How'd you like bein' my crony, huh?"

"I'd like it awfully, Mr. Waters."

"Then it's cronies we be, Specks, cronies fer—" and he extended a big dirty paw to the boy, who took it bashfully, "cronies fer a thou-sand-years—and—a-day!"

Waters nervously fumbled in a side pocket of his coat, pulled out a pipe and a pouch of tobacco and fell to smoking desperately.

"You see," he began between puffs, "they hain't many folks that's real true cronies; mighty few of 'em, Specks; mighty few of 'em. This here pipe has been about my only crony fer quite a spell. Sometimes I git awful lonesome, Specks, and then I need a crony."

The least suggestion of a film dimmed the eye of Waters and was reproduced sympathetically in the eyes of the boy.

"You see," he continued, "when a feller gits tired of hisself, w'y then he needs another feller what ain't tired of hisself to tell him he ain't all bad, lessen he fergits—fergits what his mother used to tell him, Specks; to be a good boy and all that sort of thing you know. It's durned easy to be bad when you ain't got no crony."

"But you're good always, hain't you, Mr. Waters?" said the boy wonderingly. "When I ain't lonesome sometimes, Specks; but then," and he sighed, "I'm middlin' lonesome most of the time."

"W'y, is your pa and your ma both of 'em dead?" inquired the boy inferentially.

Waters smiled; but this time it was simply the stretching of a parched mouth without the halo.

"Tain't that," he said, and fell to work with exaggerated industry.

"And you see," again began the foreman droningly, timing his words with the click of the type, "I could tell you a lot of true yarns about pirates and buried treasures and how I lost my looker and how I got this wooden kicker and, say!—I know where there's a buried treasure!"

"Huh!"

The boy's body stiffened into an exclamation point.

"Yes, siree! Think I'm spinnin' you a yarn? Would a feller lie to his crony?"

"Where is it?" cried the boy, converting a half stickful into hopeless pi in his excitement.

"Clost by, Specks; but I hain't ready to show you yet."

The boy fell nervously to throwing in the pied type and Waters puffed his pipe and worked many minutes in silence.

Suddenly the foreman blew a long breath that whistled drily through his lips like a gusty hot wind wheezing up parched gulches in August. In an awesome whisper he announced his condition.

"I'm dry!"

Specks looked at his crony in wonderment and pointed to the water pail. But the foreman shook his head hopelessly.

"Water! When I was jest a little squallin' feller," he said, "the old folks called me Waters; never could stand the name nor the thing since! I kin recollect that I took to drinkin' milk to onct; drank that till I got so big I was ashamed of myself. But no, siree, I couldn't never get used to water! W'y, Specks! Water! Do you know what water's made out of? W'y, *oxgin* and *hydrygin*! Them's both of 'em rank poisons to my system."

He slapped his hand upon the region of his stomach.

"Reckon you've heard tell of Sahary, hain't you? Well, Specks, this here is Sahary!"

Specks dropped his lower jaw in astonishment at the startling geography of Mr. Waters.

"Yes, sir!" continued Waters, "this here is worse'n Sahary. It's somethin' that hain't *in* the g'ographies, Specks. It's h—e—double !! Did you ever see clay so dry of an August that it cracked like a sore lip? Well, that there clay was all soaked with wet 'longside of my stomach. I'm dry! And things can't never be no wetter till there's moist're; and it takes

money to make moist're! Say, Specks, you hain't got some dimes concealed about you?"

It happened that Specks had and he readily loaned them to his crony, who immediately started for the door. In a few minutes he returned grinning pleasantly. He threw himself into a chair and produced a large flask of whisky. He pulled the cork, and placing the flask to his lips, took a long deliberate pull at the liquor.

"It's been pretty danged cloudy fer some time, Specks," he said, "but it's goin' to rain a spell now and by-and-bye the sun's goin' to come out!"

He took another long pull at the liquor and his smile got back its halo.

"I kin feel the verd're a-growin' all over my arid trac's!" he announced, with a sigh and an expression of supreme comfort. "The birds is beginnin' to twitter in my head."

He put his mouth down over the neck of the flask a third time and it showered quite heavily for a minute. Then the sun came out.

"Say, Specks," he went on garrulously, now completely oblivious of his work, "don't you know I love my dear old stomach? Never deny 'er nothin' whatever. Me and her has been cronies and ached fer emptiness lots of times when we hadn't nothin' else pertic'lar to be about. When I die op'lent or rich or somethin', goin' to will everything I got to my stomach. Good in me, eh?

"Say," he continued amid hic-coughing, "I was borned thirsty! Borned that-away! Yessir! 'Tain't my fault, howsoever. It's the Zodiac's!"

"The what's?" gasped Specks in awe at the marvelous verbosity of his crony.

"W'y, the Zodiac's!" reiterated Waters sharply. "Say, you hunt me up an almanax and I'll explain it to you. Yes, that's one a-hangin' on the wall there. Now, Specks, you give me your undivisible intention (as the schoolma'am says), your dirisible extension; you know what I mean. Well, do you see that there ring around

that feller what's got the horr'ble rip into his belly? Well, that there is nothin' more or less than the Zodiac! Learnin' is sweet, hain't it?"

Mr. Waters's smile was extravagant.

"Well," he continued with the air of a pedagogue, "do you see them there crawdads and lions and tarantillers and billy-goats and things pasted onto the ring around that feller with the ripped stomach? Them, Specks, them is the signs of the Zodiac!"

At this critical point in the astronomical education of Specks Waters smiled a broad and maudlin smile by way of deepening the impression.

"Yes, sir, Specks, them is the signs of the Zodiac! Now every feller what gits borned is got to be borned in one of them there signs. Understand? If he refuses," continued Waters with impressive deliberation, "if he refuses to be borned under one of them there signs, w'y, then, he gits the beautiful privilege of bein' borned into this here kind and pleasant world snatched from him afore he gits a mouth to squall with about it!

"Now I was borned in this here sign where the feller 'thout no shirt on is a-pourin' out the liquor. They call that feller Aquar'us, which means in the Irish tongue *Him that handles liquors!* Now per'aps they hain't no happenin' in a man's life that he'd ought to be so keerful about as bein' borned. First, he'd ought to pick hisself a good mother; second, he'd ought to aim to git into a rich fambly; third, he'd ought to have some kind of a pa; and fourth, Specks, fourth, he'd ought to wait till he kin git the right sign! There was the mistake of my c'reer. Hang it, Specks, I'd ought to knowed better than bein' borned under that there sign!"

Waters produced a vacuum in the flask in his efforts to drink the last drop. He removed his mouth with a report like that of a distant gun.

"Yes, sir, Specks," he continued with a weary inflection to his voice, "bein' borned was bad enough, but bein' borned under them conditions was abs'lutely ru'rous!"

"Seemed like I knowed I was bein' borned under a thirsty sign, 'cause the first thing I knowed after I come to I was a-bellerin' my little lungs out fer a drink. Hain't never got enough to drink yet. Goin' to be thirsty till they drop me into the bitter hole and kick the clods into my mouth."

At the last weary word Waters ran down like a neglected clock. His jaw dropped; his one eye winked convulsively and then closed with a nervous lid. He leaned limply back in his chair and began to snore.

Specks was frightened, not for himself, but for his crony. He felt a lump in his throat at the thought of Mr. Simpson discharging the foreman. He tried to arouse the heavy sleeper.

"Go off!" muttered Waters, blubbering something with twitching lips that would doubtless have been masterly swearing if the lips had been sober. Specks sat dejectedly on the floor and rocked his head in his hands. Suddenly he was seized with a strong resolution. Perhaps Mr. Simpson would return next day. By that time there should be at least two galleys of type set. Specks resolved to set the type himself.

With much tugging he dragged his slumbering crony into a back room, placed a bundle of papers under his head, then went to his stool and fell to work with desperate energy. All day he worked, worked, worked. At times tears came into his eyes and he snivelled softly. For what if Mr. Waters—his first real crony—should go away?

Specks was the only child of the widow, Mrs. Sprangs, whose husband had gone West with the great tide of gold-seekers in the early fifties, leaving her in the little Missouri River town to which he hoped to return in a few years, rich enough to make his wife and little son happy. But as no word had been received since his going, Mrs. Sprangs little by little lost hope, and accepted widowhood with inward grief and outward resignation. For years she had supported herself and her boy by washing clothes.

Perhaps it was his own life that made

the boy's heart respond to the lonesomeness of Mr. Waters.

At supper Specks was nervous and preoccupied. His tongue, which generally ran at too rapid a rate for his tired mother's comfort, was strangely still. But when his mother, fearing for his health, questioned him closely Specks ran off into an elaborate rhapsody concerning cronies and buried treasure, through which the name of Waters ran like a recurring melody.

After supper Specks again startled his mother by washing his feet promptly at eight o'clock, and going to bed without a struggle. This was unheard of, and Mrs. Sprangs fell to sleep that night unusually happy at the prospect of raising a boy with habits of such promising regularity. She felt a warm place growing in her heart for this Mr. Waters. He must be a very good man, she thought, to exercise so commendable an influence over her son.

But Specks did not fall to sleep. He sat upon the edge of the bed, listening with strained ears to the breathing of his mother. When the breathing at last came with the depth and regularity of heavy slumber he crept stealthily out of the house, and ran at the top of his speed to the office of the *Trumpet*.

Carefully covering the windows, that no one could see his light, he lit a battered brass lamp hanging above the cases. Being assured of the well-being of his crony, by the sound of heavy breathing from the back room, Specks began setting type with nervous energy.

In the dead of the night he was aroused from his stupor-like attention to his work by a groan from the back room.

"Don't be too plagued hard onto me!" It was the voice of Waters tossing in drunken slumber. "Don't want to be a bad feller, Specks." The voice became fuddled. "You'd ought to know I've been lonesome allus; gimme a chanct." After another period of unintelligible muttering the voice of Waters came faintly again. "If nobody keered, wouldn't you be like me?"

The sleeper turned heavily and fell to snoring again. At four o'clock in the

morning Specks placed the last necessary stickful of type in the galley. Then taking the lamp he tiptoed into the back room. Waters lay on his back. His face was hardly recognizable as the one which had borne the smile with a halo. It was marked as with years of suffering and mental anguish; and under the twitching lid of his eye a tear sparkled in the lamplight.

## III

## THE CUTTING OF THE NOTCH

"SAY, Specks," said Waters on the Saturday afternoon following his entanglement with the Zodiac, "let's you and me take a boat and go up the river tomorrow. Mebbe I could spin a few yarns about when I was the cap'n of a sailin' vessel, and how I lost my eye and my leg; and say, mebbe I could show you somethin' nice about handlin' a boat."

Specks was delighted.

"And then we'd hunt for the buried treasure!" he cried excitedly; then his countenance darkened. "Don't know as ma would let me go, though. May-be if you'd ask her she'd let me."

"Me?"

There was the faintest hint of sadness in the voice of Waters. The boy's eyes dilated in wonderment.

"W'y, my ma is awful good, Mr. Waters," he said, "and pretty," he added irrelevantly.

"Does she know I hain't got only one eye?"

The boy nodded affirmatively.

"And a wooden leg?"

Another nod.

"And ragged clothes?"

A third nod.

"Then I'll ask her, Specks."

They worked for some time in silence.

"Say," said Specks, suddenly turning upon Waters, "grin when you ask her; like you do at me."

So it happened that evening as Mrs. Sprangs was wearily putting the fag-end of a large washing through the rinse that Specks, with face beaming prema-

ture conciliation, appeared upon the scene, half leading, half dragging by the hand a ragged and reluctant visitor who bashfully supervised the noisy evolutions of his iron-shod leg with one downcast eye.

Mrs. Sprangs, a woman in the early thirties, of medium height and rather substantial build, with a winsome motherliness glowing through the many lines of care that seamed her face, raised her head from the washtub and looked at the visitor with a sudden catching of the breath. For a breathless moment her dripping hands hung motionless above the tub with surprise at the strange appearance of the man.

Waters, venturing a glance upward in the awkward silence, saw the expression of the woman's face, and dropped his eye nervously, while his lips twitched as with a bitterness of heart.

"Say, ma, this is him!" Specks cried with a forced joyfulness; then drawing closer to his crony, he gave the man a friendly dig in the ribs.

"Grin!" he prompted in a stage whisper.

Waters, like a man who does his duty, raised his eye and spread his lips in a vain attempt to simulate good nature.

"This is Mr. Waters?" said Mrs. Sprangs, hurriedly wiping her hands upon her apron, and extending the first dried to Waters, who took it limply. "The boy has been talking of nothing else, Mr. Waters. I'm glad you came; won't you stay for supper? I've got some meat on boiling, and it won't be long."

The voice of Mrs. Sprangs was soft and sincere, and as Waters listened the skeleton smile took on its halo. Specks, more delighted at the ultimate success of his crony's smile than at the prospect of eating supper together, danced about the place on one foot.

"Goody! You're going to stay, you're going to stay! Take off your hat, Mr. Waters, you're going to stay!" Grasping the battered headpiece of his crony, he politely threw it into a corner and followed it with his own.

During the preparation for supper Waters administered a shock to his

nervous system by carefully washing his face and combing his hair. Then he sat down and wistfully watched the rapid movements of Mrs. Sprangs vibrating between stove and table.

Lulled by the domestic clanking of knives and forks and plates, he closed his eye and dreamed sweetly after his manner. He tried to imagine this place as his home, Specks as his boy and Mrs. Sprangs's. He did not permit himself to dream further, but opened his eye and looked carelessly out of the window. A strange sweet music throbbed in his blood. The barren stretch of prairie upon which he gazed abstractedly was touched with the late sunlight that seemed to go into his blood and glorify him.

At supper Waters ate much and spoke little, while the tongue of Mrs. Sprangs ran on pleasantly. Waters listened and heard nothing but music, setting his own indefinite meaning to the sound.

The mother readily permitted the boy to go with his crony the next day; and at the insistence of Specks, Waters stayed all night with his crony, that they might get an earlier start.

"I'll put up a lunch for you," said Mrs. Sprangs; "I want the boy to have a good time, because he works so hard, when at his age he ought to be playing, Mr. Waters. And he's a mighty big help to his mother. Times have been hard since Sprangs went away and never came back," she said pensively.

A strange mixed feeling of anger and joy shook Mr. Waters and emboldened him to ask: "He's dead, Mr. Sprangs?"

Mrs. Sprangs shook her head sadly. "We've give him up."

That night Specks talked himself to sleep about sailing vessels and their captains and buried treasure, to all of which Waters answered only in monosyllables. When at last the boy slept his dreams were full of a heroic man with flowing yellow locks who did impossible things, with his eye glaring like a bull's-eye lantern and his iron-shod wooden leg making small thunder

as he ramped about in a confusion of mutiny and storm and shipwreck.

But the thoughts of the other may be said to have been commonplace. He was contemplating the advisability of buying a can of varnish for his wooden leg!

The next morning the two cronies, reaching the river at sunrise, with a dinner basket and a shovel and pick, brought at the insistence of Specks, pushed off in a small boat, and Waters, with the ease of a skilful oarsman, pushed upstream, keeping near the shore where the current was light. He was even more garrulous than was his wont. His face shone with an inner sunlight. He timed the long pull at the oars with the wild air of an old seasong, and his one eye sparkled even as the dripping oars smitten by the dawn.

"Guess you never hunted treasure afore," he remarked affably. "Guess mebbe you're wonderin' how I come to know about buried treasure. Well, Specks, Mr. Waters he helped to bury this one hisself!"

Specks opened his eyes wide in surprise.

"Ten years ago," Waters went on, as he pulled leisurely at his oars, "I was carpenter on the steamboat *Saucy Heels*, runnin' between St. Louis and Fort Benton. One Spring we started up the river with a cargo of whisky—keg after keg of it, boy, keg after keg! Think of it! When the niggers was aloadin' it at St. Louis, mebbe I didn't git dry! There was enough liquor in that hold to drown a boatload of good swimmers all to onct. All the way up the river I dreamed about swimmin' in seas of the stuff.

"It was a fine moonlight night when we got to a place about five miles up the river from Calhoun. I was out onto the deck a-pacin' up and down, when all of a sudden she stopped with a chug, shiverin' all over like a man does when you shove a long knife-blade into him. You're too young to know about that, though.

"She'd struck a snag, and you could feel her a-settin' fast. Everybody comes runnin' on deck, but we couldn't

save her. Had to lower the boats and get away. Well, Specks, when we was pullin' away, the boat settled down until only the stacks was showin'. I pretty nigh bawled when I thought of all that good liquor down there at the bottom, and me naturally such a thirsty feller. I says to myself like this: I says, 'Mr. Waters, you get the bearin's of that treasure, and some time or other mebbe you'll be glad you did.' That's what I says, 'cause, you see, I knowed that she'd sink in the sand and get buried up, and 'twasn't likely nobody'd try to raise her them days.

"Them days the channel was clost into the Nebrasky side, and the *Saucy* went down in the channel within a hundred feet of a high bluff that looked somethin' like an Injun's head from down the river, and it had a big boulder a-stickin' out of it fer a nose."

At that moment the boy raised his eyes from the animated face of Waters and looked up the river. There, about two miles across the expanse of yellow water, was the Indian-head bluff, nose and all. Specks gave a shout of triumph. Waters smiled, but did not turn around.

"As I was sayin'," continued Waters, "while we was a-pullin' away in the moonlight, I got to thinkin' about all that good liquor into the *Saucy Heels's* belly, and I said to myself I'd like to be buried like her with a bellyful like her'n. 'Cause it was good liquor.

"That night the crew made camp on shore. Along about three o'clock, when they was all a-sleepin', I sneaks away and takin' one of the smallest boats, I takes up the river, keepin' clost to the bluffs. About sunrise I hides in the brush till in the afternoon. Then I drops down the river, and when I was sure that the crew had gone down the river back to Kanesville, I pulls out to where the boat went down, and ties up to the smokestacks. Then I marks the spot.

"I looked up the river and down the river for landmarks. Up the river was a bluff with a sharp point at the top of

it and a big tree growin' out of one side of it. Down the river there was another bluff, not so high as the first and shaped about like a loaf of bread. Then I looked at the Indian-head bluff. Now I drawed a line from the bluff with a tree on it to the bluff that looked like a loaf of bread. I drawed another line from the boulder on the Indian-head bluff down to my feet, and that last line jest about struck the other line square."

At the last word Waters's face suddenly darkened. He began to whistle softly under his mustache, but this time it was not the rollicking sailor's air, but a low, soft, caressing sequence of notes like an old-fashioned love song. That which he did next was utterly incomprehensible to Specks. Instead of pushing violently on toward the buried treasure, as the boy would have done, Waters turned the prow of the boat toward the shore and pushed into a quiet cove over which a large cottonwood cast an inviting shade.

"Let's rest," he said, momentarily breaking the soft thread of the whistled air. Then he pulled the boat on shore, and finding a grassy knoll under the shade, he threw himself upon his back, and for many minutes there was no sound but the lapping of the water on the sand and the drone of a faintly whistled melody.

"Sun's warm," he remarked at length with a seeming irrelevance that exasperated Specks. "Air's soft." And the melody began again.

"Like to lay onto my back and breathe—jest breathe."

After lighting his pipe in silence, he spoke again softly like a man in a dream.

"Say, boy," he said, puffing violently like an engine taking a difficult grade, "you've got a nice ma—damn nice ma!"

A meadowlark filled the embarrassed silence with its clear notes. Waters lazily watched the smoke from his pipe ascending in graceful spirals.

"Hain't never goin' to drink no more, Specks," he announced. "'Tain't no

use drinkin' liquor when it ain't really what a feller's been thirsty fer allus."

Several hours passed, during which Waters spoke little except to answer the questions of the impatient Specks.

"I'm hungry!" exclaimed Specks, when he had at last run short of questions, and had failed to arouse his crony. Together the two went down to the boat to get the lunch.

"You git dinner, and I'll be there d'rectly, Specks," said Waters.

When the meal had been spread Specks, having repeatedly called without answer, went in search of his crony. He was leaning over the side of the boat and gazing at his reflection in the water. At the sound of the boy's approach he raised his head.

"Say, Specks," he asked, "could you notice my bad eye much—providin' you liked me some?"

After dinner Waters was again provokingly silent, except once when he raised himself upon his elbow, and with a rapt expression upon his disfigured face, said with a voice like a low cry of supplication: "They hain't no shad-ders no place! Did you hear that medderlark? I want to believe what he says!"

Then he took a jackknife out of his pocket and with infinite care cut a deep notch in his wooden leg near the knee.

"Onct fer every time I'm happy!" he explained; and Specks was mystified.

As the two cronies drifted downstream toward home that afternoon, Waters said very little. In fact, this is all he said: "Specks, I guess I'll quit cussin'."

#### IV

##### THE TREASURE

UPON the following Monday morning the foreman of the *Trumpet* astonished Mr. Simpson and Specks by appearing at the office with a carefully sandpapered and varnished wooden leg. Furthermore, the ragged portions of his clothes had been patched with almost feminine deftness. In addition to this, the straggling whisk-

ers had been shaved, the ears cleansed, and the erstwhile unkempt hair had been washed and combed and now glistened with golden curls.

Mr. Simpson, being a man of strong opinions and few words, looked long and critically over his glasses and finally expressed his surprise laconically. "I'll be cussed!"

Waters simply smiled at this criticism, and all that week was as sunny as his locks of gold.

On the following Saturday evening he invited himself to accompany Specks home, to the great delight of the boy.

"You see," he said, whistling softly in the midst of a broken sentence, "I want to talk business"—more whistling—"with your" (ever so softly) "ma."

Mrs. Sprangs, influenced by the ever-increasing praise of his crony that Specks sang in ecstatic crescendo from day to day, received Waters with a frank cordiality that put a sudden crimson in his weather-beaten and recently shaven cheek.

An invitation to supper was readily accepted by Waters. Throughout the meal he was entertainingly loquacious. He drew endlessly upon his checkered past for tales partly credible; and his droll and jovial manner drew from his toil-worn hostess more laughter than she had known "since Sprangs left," as she avowed with a sudden dropping of spirits. At the name of Sprangs the face of the guest darkened visibly, as a sunny sky is darkened with the passing of a cloud.

When the dishes had been removed the party of three withdrew to the "front" room. Waters had grown strangely silent. He fumbled his fingers, twiddled his thumbs, coughed, and finally broke the silence.

"Keer 'f I smoke?"

Mrs. Sprangs liked the smell of smoke. "Sprangs used to smoke of evenings," she explained. Waters lit his pipe and puffed furiously, hiding his troubled face in a gray cloud. When the cloud cleared he raised a faint and embarrassed voice.

"Well, you see, Mrs. Sprangs—" He could get no further and proceeded only when he had again clouded his face with smoke, speaking through the cloud. "You see, me and Specks here is cronies; we like each other pretty dam—that is, we think a lot of one 'nother. I says, mebbe you'd oughtn't work so hard; not as I'd be meddin', but—" He blew out a great cloud of smoke to hide his confusion. "But—well, I want to give the boy a little money now and then—so's you won't need to work so dam—so awful hard, that is!"

Frightened with his own words, he endeavored to retrieve the disaster. "Looks like it might rain soon!"

Feeling foolish, he built a blue fog about his head, and blushed in it. When he at length ventured to emerge from his cloud Mrs. Sprangs was slowly shaking her head.

"It's awfully kind of you, Mr. Waters; you're awfully good to speak of it; but it wouldn't be right, Mr. Waters; it wouldn't be just right."

"Well, I was jest a-thinkin', that's all, you know; jest a-thinkin', that's all." Waters spoke as though the matter was one of small moment to him. Then he switched the conversation disconnectedly to the weather, as though that were of infinitely greater consequence.

"It *does* look like rain; I see a big bank of clouds in the east as we come up!" In fact, the sky had been clear all day.

There was a heavy silence for some moments, during which Waters gave undue attention to his pipestem, which had mysteriously refused to draw! During the few moments of silence the man's brain was feverishly active. His face lightened. He thought he had run upon a scheme whereby Mrs. Sprangs would receive aid at his hands. There was the sunken cargo of fine liquors. He knew where it had lain hidden these ten years. He and the boy would discover it together, and he would set up a saloon and sell it. Half the profits would thus rightfully belong to Specks. If Mrs. Sprangs refused to

allow Specks to be half owner of the saloon, why, then he would *buy* Specks's interest, and pay in monthly installments. Yet his heart sickened at the thought of the temptation that would thus be his. It was for this reason that he had suddenly decided to forego further search for the treasure on the previous Sunday, to the great mystification of Specks.

But now it was different. He would discover it—he and Specks. He would not drink; not a drop! And maybe—maybe—who could tell? In the Spring when the ice went down the river and the robins came and the meadowlarks were singing—well, wouldn't he have plenty of money? Maybe then, when the hills were getting back their green, maybe . . .

Waters blushed and began to talk in an agitation which seemed wholly unwarranted.

"Can Specks and me go up the river again tomorrow?"

Mrs. Sprangs readily consented. So early the next morning the two cronies put off from the Calhoun landing in a rowboat, equipped with spades, picks and a lantern. There was nothing leisurely about the manner of Waters. He rolled his sleeves above the elbows, braced his legs and pulled up the stream with a long, powerful stroke.

By way of enlivening the conversation, which Waters allowed to lag, Specks made a number of enthusiastic remarks concerning his crony's rowing.

"Learned it when I was a-sailin' the sea," he announced with an air of pride. "When I was your age I was a-stickin' type like you, but I didn't keep at it. Never kept at nothin'. Run away to sea. . . . And I was the cap'n of a sailin' vessel onct," he continued, grunting with his long strokes. "Yessir, Specks, *cap'n*! That's how I lost my leg and my looker, you know."

"How?" queried Specks.

"Pi-ruts!" explained Waters laconically. It was at least the seventh explanation of the calamity, and Specks, in the whole-heartedness of his chumship, did his best to believe them

all at once. The required mental effort, however, produced silence.

An hour before noon the two cronies had pulled into the shore over which towered the Indian-head bluff. The river, which had formerly flowed almost at the foot of the bluff, was now three-quarters of a mile distant from it, having left a flat bottom of sand covered with a heavy growth of willows. The size of the willows indicated that the ever-capricious Missouri had swerved from its old channel within a year or two after the sinking of the *Saucy Heels*.

Waters carefully examined the landscape and readily located the two other bluffs; one downstream from the Indian head, shaped like a loaf of bread; the other upstream, marked conspicuously at its summit with an unusually large scrub oak, standing alone against the sky.

Having placed himself on a line between the two smaller bluffs, Waters, followed by Specks, walked rapidly on among the willows until he came to that point where a line drawn from the Indian head's summit to his feet made a right angle with the imaginary line upon which he stood.

"This is about the place, Specks," he said thoughtfully. Then the two fell to cutting away the willows. The sand, being moist, was easily piled up. After several hours of hard labor, Waters struck something with his spade.

"There she is!" he cried; and the two fell madly to clearing away the sand, disclosing a level surface covered with rusted sheet metal.

"It's the hurricane deck of the *Saucy Heels!*" declared Waters, and, after a few hollow-sounding strokes from a pick, the rotten wood gave way. Soon Waters had cut a hole large enough to admit a body.

Lighting a lantern, he lowered it into the hole, and the two, lying down, gazed into the darkness. A gust of foul air almost stifled them. They saw indistinctly in the ghostly glow of the flickering lantern flame the interior of a steamboat's cabin. The

walls were covered with mold and slime. As Specks gazed, he shivered with a strange dread. The glow of the lantern availed but to cast a sickly illumination in the putrid air, and the deserted aspect of the room with its scant furniture, still in order as though nothing had happened, was like a sick man's memory of a melancholy dream. The place could have been the den of personified Despair!

"It's the old place," muttered Waters musingly, "the old place." Then with a sudden movement, he slung the lantern bail over one arm, threw his legs into the hole, and letting himself down at arm's length, dropped. The sound of his iron-shod wooden leg striking upon the damp boards of the floor was sepulchral. It suggested the impatient grave-digger kicking an unusually large clod upon the rough box!

Specks lay upon his stomach, stricken motionless with the dread mystery of the place. He heard the dull whine of rusty hinges; then the sound of coughing and the iron-shod leg stumping on into another room. The lantern's glow was swallowed in the heavy darkness; fainter, fainter came the reverberating sound of coughing and the stumping of the wooden leg.

Then these were swallowed up as though drunk in by the impenetrable darkness, and there was no sound but the occasional drip of water echoing dismally in the cavernous night of the place.

"Mr. Waters! Oh, Mr. Waters!"

Specks's terrified voice rumbled down the darkness like the sound of a distant explosion. Then the awful silence, pierced by the small *drip-drop* of the water.

As Specks listened he fancied he heard a faint answer. Yet he was not sure. It might have been simply the far cry of a belated echo. A great fear seized him. Had his crony met with an accident in the gruesome place? He thought of going to the aid of his crony, and shivered. No, he would wait a while; and anyway, he had no lantern.

Half an hour passed. It seemed a week. Specks waited; his ears strained in the heavy silence and his eyes strained in the heavy darkness. An hour passed.

Suddenly he heard a hoarse, muffled song. It came up from the hollow earth as if the dead were singing with their mouths half full of grave-dust:

"All to the tune of the booming sail,  
The shriek of the blowing spr-a-y,  
The devil he waitzed up over the rail,  
And led the ship as-tr-a-y!  
Tra-le-la-le-la-le-oh,  
Tra-le-la-le-lay!"

"Oh, I was the cap'n of the ship,  
And I was a merry so-u!;  
The fishes stripped my skeleton,  
The devil got my so-u!  
With a tra-le-la-le-la-le-oh,  
And a tra-le-la-le-lay!"

"And it's what if the tides go in and out,  
And what if the old World gro-ans?  
I sing in the emerald halls of the sea,  
And jig with my rattling bo-nes!  
With a tra-le-la-le-la-le-oh,  
And a tra-le-la-le-lay!  
Oh, ho!  
Tra-la-lay!"

The song reverberated through the damp chambers until it seemed that a hundred wheezing throats, dry with grave-rot, took up the nonsensical refrain. As Specks peered into the darkness and heard the song, he shivered as one whom a nightmare holds speechless.

"With an oh, ho!  
Tra-le-la-le-lay!"

The song suddenly ceased, as though a great sea wind had blown it out of the mouth of the singer. There grew up from the black depths a sound as of a number of men quarreling. There were cursings and blows, all muffled as sounds in a dream.

Could it be possible, Specks thought, that there really were such things as ghosts and that Mr. Waters was quarreling over the treasure with those who had followed the river years before?

Specks suddenly remembered the words of Waters: "They hain't many folks what's real true cronies." Was he a real true crony if he left Mr. Waters

in possible danger now? No! he would go in search of his crony.

He gathered a bunch of long slough grass and twisted it into torches. With these under his arm, he jumped down into the boat's cabin, rolling over and over on the slimy floor. When he arose, he stood transfixed and shivering with fear for several moments. Then he took a match from his pocket and lit a torch. The flaring light made him bolder. He tried to whistle. It wouldn't come.

"Mr. Waters! Oh, Mr. Waters!" he cried as he pushed through the half-open door of the room.

"With an oh, ho!  
Tra-le-la-le-lay!"

Only the wild fragment of the refrain came for an answer. Specks found himself in a room in which rotting ropes and rusty chains were piled. There was a stairway leading down into the darkness ahead of him.

"Tra-le-la-le-la-la-lay,  
Tra-le-la-le, oh!  
With an oh, ho!  
Tra-le-la-le-lay!"

The song came up the stairs. Specks pushed on and started down the steps that yielded with an oozing sound under his feet. When he was half-way down a step gave way and he tumbled to the bottom, landing in ooze and slime and total darkness, the torch having been extinguished in the fall.

Specks struck another match and found his torches. He lit one and proceeded in the direction of the song, which was louder now. He came to another half-opened door and another flight of steps, which he descended. Now, for the first time, having become accustomed to the darkness, Specks noticed the foulness of the air. It almost stifled him. The torch burned with an impoverished light that filled the shadows with ghosts.

Gasping, he held the torch high above his head and pushed on toward the wild song, sometimes rising to a shout and sometimes dwindling to an eerie croon. He suddenly found himself standing in another doorway, through which he could see a long room

stacked full of kegs, row on row, up to the ceiling. The song came out from among the kegs, and Specks hurried toward it, half recognizing, as he thought, the voice of his crony.

"Oh, the devil and me  
Went out to sea  
With a tra——"

As though the singer had been thrown overboard by the wash of a tremendous sea, the song stopped abruptly.

"Stand back there!"

The sharp words, hurled through the shadows in the curt gutturals of anger, chilled Specks like a blast of cold wind. At a distance of about twenty feet from him he saw Waters leaning against the kegs. The lantern, with a smashed globe, lay near him. He had unbuckled his wooden leg and now grasped it by the smaller end. The dim light, falling upon his face, illuminated a most terrible countenance. His eye was dilated with excitement and the darkness, which had been shattered by the boy's torch, and he stared wildly in the unaccustomed light. He was haggard, and the light deepened the lines in his face. His hat had fallen off, and his long, ruffled hair hung in tangles about his forehead and ears. A keg in one of the tiers near-by was dripping from a shattered bung. This explained matters to Specks. Waters and the Zodiac had gotten tangled again!

"Stand back there! You ——! Hain't I the cap'n of this here ship?"

Waters swung his wooden leg furiously about his head, the swinging straps at the knee whistling strangely in the stuffy place. He let the missile fly at the boy's head. Specks ducked, and the wooden leg struck his torch and extinguished it. As the darkness shut in about him, he shrieked, and dropping upon his stomach, he lay as close as possible to the slimy floor and shivered.

"Oh, Mr. Waters!" he whimpered softly, hoping to soothe his crony. "Oh, Mr. Waters, I'm your crony! Don't you know?"

The shock of the returning darkness and the shriek had sobered Waters.

"O boy! boy! Did I kill you? Quick! Yell again! You hain't dead?"

"N-o-o," whimpered Specks. Waters crawled upon his hands and knees through the blackness, till he reached the body of Specks, stretched face downward upon the slimy floor, but very much alive and quivering with fright. He put his arms tenderly about his crony, and they both wept hysterically for a while.

Waters fumbled in his pocket for a match, hopped over to the globeless lantern and lit it. Then Specks recovered the wooden leg and helped buckle it on. Waters was now quite sober, but trembling nervously.

"Look, Specks!" he said, pointing to the kegs, piled tier on dimmer tier to the ceiling. "Thousands of dollars, Specks! Thousands of dollars!"

The prospect of sudden wealth destroyed all fear for Specks. He immediately began planning means for carrying a small cargo of the liquor down to Calhoun. Although Waters was weakened with his recent intoxication, the two managed to get five kegs of the old liquor to the room in the upper cabin which they had first entered. They stood several kegs on end, and Waters was thus enabled to reach the edges of the hole in the roof and draw himself up. Then with the use of a rusty chain found in the next room the kegs were hoisted through the hole. Having covered the opening carefully with willows and sand, that the place might not be discovered, should anyone chance that way, which was quite improbable in that early day, the two cronies loaded the boat with the liquor and started down the stream.

As they floated down the stream in the cloudless, starry night, the two organized the firm of "Waters & Co., Liquor Dealers," and Waters announced that he would run the business with Specks as silent partner.

Then the conversation languished. The senior member of the new liquor firm was wrestling with his conscience.

For half an hour he was endeavoring to reason away a persistent shame over his recent entanglement with the Zodiac. That which he said, when at length he broke the silence, was incomprehensible to Specks, but no doubt it meant much to Waters.

"Specks, you have allus got to figger on a feller havin' in'ards!"

## V

## WATERS &amp; CO., LIQUOR DEALERS

WHEN Waters came to the printing office on the following Monday morning he made an announcement that fairly knocked the wind out of the *Trumpet*. It did not blow for three weeks. The foreman tendered his resignation to Mr. Simpson, and insisted that it take effect at once. He spoke his piece with his hat in his hand and triumph in his eye. The speech, in which he explained that he was forced to take this sudden step through an unforeseen stroke of good fortune, had cost him several sleepless hours the night before, when he had drawn laboriously from his treacherous memory of the pompous war editorials he had set up, that his resignation might be couched in terms befitting the dignity of the senior member of the firm of Waters & Co.

Mr. Simpson built a blue fog of profanity about himself, and said things in it somewhat derogatory of the general character of Luck. When the first burst of wrath had allowed the blue fog to clear away the foreman had departed, and the sound of his retreat ing iron-shod leg came in faintly at the door.

That day there was a new topic under discussion at the grocery store. For weeks past no new bad man had been reported, no "Indian skeer" had been scattered by the freighters, and the wisdom of the loungers had been lavished upon the unsuspecting leaders of the great war.

But upon this particular day the war was shamefully neglected.

"They's somethin' mysteरus to it,"  
July, 1907-9

said the groceryman to his audience, "mysteरus!"

"Who? What?" inquired a newly arrived delegate.

"W'y, hain't you heerd? That one-eyed, wooden-legged printer, and the speckled youngster of the widder's, is buildin' a saloon down by the river!"

"A saloon?"

"A saloon!"

"And Waters has throwed up his job!"

"Throwed it up?"

"Throwed it up!"

"Somethin' mysteरus about it!"

"Looks that way."

"Where'll they git the liquor?"

The grocer smiled a superior smile for answer. "That Mr. Waters is a strange feller; folks hes it that he was onct a pirut!"

"A pirut?"

"A pirut!"

"What's the boy a-helpin' him fer?"

"Hain't you heerd?"

Most of the audience shook its head negatively.

"Hain't Mrs. Sprangs a widder?"

The collective mouth of the audience stretched itself into a knowing grin.

"Sweet onto one another!"

The collective mouth of the audience laughed.

"Leastwise, that's what folks is sayin'."

"But the liquor?"

"Mysteरus!"

That afternoon there was not a prune nor a pipeful of tobacco sold at the grocery store. The social centre of Calhoun had moved down to the river, and the shack which Waters and Specks were building rapidly was that social centre.

While Waters sawed and hammered, Specks was engaged with a cotton-wood board and a can of paint, with which he was elaborating a sign, which, when completed, read as follows:

BURIED TREASURE BUFFET  
WATERS & CO.

The onlookers gasped in wonder as the sign developed.

"Buried Treasure?"

"Buried Treasure!"

"Ah!"

"Oh!"

"But the liquor?"

"Mysteerus!"

"Looks like a pirate!"

"Who knows? Mebbe that's why he's got only one leg and one eye!"

"But the liquor?"

"Mysteerus!"

When the two cronies had finished their work for the day the crowd followed them up the street, keeping at a distance compatible with piratical possibilities. That night the convention at the grocery store did not adjourn until the lamp burned out. The convention, unconventionally, came to a conclusion: that Waters was an ex-pirate that Waters and Mrs. Sprangs were "sweet onto one another," and that the liquor problem was utterly "mysteerus!"

But the sensation of the week reached its climax on the morning of the second day, when the "Buried Treasure Buffet" opened for business with five kegs of liquor in stock. An habitual lounger, arriving late at the grocery store, out of breath and wiping his mustache, dropped the news in among the loungers dozing in the morning heat, as a small boy drops a stone into a slumbering frog-pond, and with like effect.

"Huh?"

"Just come from there!"

"Where'd they get it?"

"Dunno."

"Good liquor?"

"Slips down like goose grease!"

One lounger got up from the counter where he had been reclining, and sauntered out into the street. The gossip went on.

"Buried!"

"Buried?"

"Buried treasure!"

A second lounger dropped silently out of the conference. Then a third and a fourth, until the groceryman, finding himself alone, got up, stretched

himself, yawned, and after carefully locking his front door, hurried toward the indisputable social centre. When he entered the shack, which was the "Buried Treasure Buffet," he found the place crowded. Waters, behind the cottonwood bar, was beating a rapid bass with his iron-shod foot to the tenor of the silver which he raked into the till. His one eye had more than the brilliance of two. His hair was carefully combed, his tanned neck was imprisoned in a high white collar, and his face glistened with triumph, assisted by a recent shave.

A barefooted boy gazed in at the door, with a light upon his face that made his tan and freckles transparent. He was engaged in hopping about on either foot, and making fantastic motions to attract the busy eye of Mr. Waters. When for a moment he was successful he winked a wise wink, as one who says "We know!"

"Where'd you get it?" inquired a customer, bracing himself to hold his place at the bar, and wiping his mouth luxuriously.

"Where in thunder *did* you get it? Gimme 'nother!"

"Well, now," began Waters, drawling with an air that savored of mystery and wisdom, "has any of you fellers ever heern tell of magic?" Then he hurried to fill another bunch of glasses at a dripping tap.

"Magic?"

"Uh-huh," replied Waters; and he accompanied his laconic reply with a mysterious movement of the hands like a prestidigitator. Everybody looked at everybody.

"Well, mebbe you're lyin' and mebbe you hain't; gimme 'nother!"

By sundown Fort Calhoun was on its sea legs. The night was like a night of celebration. Everybody seemed to be out on the street making noises. The very dogs caught the spirit of the hour, and howled up and down the town.

Late in the night the senior member of the firm of Waters & Co. closed and barred the doors of the Buried Treasure

Buffet. Then he counted his money. The result almost staggered him! This sudden success gave him a wild desire to "celebrate" the events of the day.

He took a glass from the bar, placed it under the tap and ran it full. Tremblingly he put it to his lips that burned as a flame to receive the draught.

A mist passed before him. In the mist there was the vision of a little weather-beaten house. Then this vision faded and was replaced by a neat front room, with a trim, plump woman sitting in it. The face of the woman was patient and kind. And lying upon his stomach at the feet of the woman was a boy with a tanned and freckled face.

The mist passed, and Waters was staring upon the glass of brown liquor.

A light went over the face of the man. He dropped the glass to the floor and quietly ground it into fragments under his foot.

## VI

### THE CRY OF THE LONESOME

THE Summer grew old, and the fame of the "Buried Treasure" grew big in the land. It reached even as far as Omaha City. Steamboats that ordinarily plied with contempt past the little port of Calhoun began to put in for a few hours to accommodate passengers who were lured by the mystery of this excellent liquor to be had of Waters & Co., Liquor Dealers. Freighters, cowboys, settlers, came many miles as pilgrims to test the magic of this Western Lourdes.

So heavy was the liquor trade that Waters & Co. made regular nocturnal trips twice a week to the sunken cargo, and the wonder of the thing grew to an almost superstitious awe when an exhausted supply of the evening was replaced in the morning.

As the Summer passed, the character of Waters became grave. He never drank, and the careless manner which characterized him on his coming to Calhoun passed away. He joked no

more with Specks; he told no more tales of mutiny and shipwreck.

One fixed idea swayed him. He who had wandered all his life among men, companionless and lonesome; he who had cried aloud as he walked in darkness; he who had reached empty arms into the shadows; he was about to hear a kind voice of companionship, feel the touch of a warm hand in the darkness. The homeless was at last in sight of home.

In the stillness of the years he had waited, and his ears were busy fashioning the long-awaited voice. In the darkness of the world he had walked, and his dreams toiled to build prodigious dawns in the heavy darkness. He, who had grown hard in his solitude, laughing defiantly into the lonesome spaces where God hid Himself, he had at last heard God in the voice of a woman, had been dazzled by the glow of the countenance of God in the sight of a kind and careworn face.

During the first week of his business career Waters had formulated the plan of his life. He would wait until his share of the earnings of the firm should reach a thousand dollars, and then—well, then, he would build his dawn; he would hear the voice, he would feel the hand.

Every Saturday evening he had given his crony half the earnings of the trade, insisting that this was merely a weekly instalment of the purchase price of Speck's half-interest in the discovery. Mrs. Sprangs had ceased to take in washing, and consequently the gossips of the village worked overtime.

One Sunday morning in early September Waters arose early, and after carefully cleaning his varnished wooden leg, dressed himself in a new suit. When he appeared upon the main street of the village a sensation was the result. Waters in a new suit was a paradox!

But he was blind to the eyes riveted upon him, deaf to the babble of loungers about him. The night before he had counted the thousandth dollar and that day he would build his dawn.

He walked rapidly up the street, and

as he walked, a faint light grew in his soul, as when the first spark of dawn glows with the breath of the morning. When he had come in sight of the little weather-beaten cottage, about which his dreams had thrown a halo, he stopped suddenly and stood, nervously beating time in the sand with his wooden leg to some tune in his head. At length he wheeled slowly about and retraced his steps. The spark sank into the grayness of ashes.

After walking slowly to the other end of the town, he turned, as if by sudden inspiration, and walked rapidly up the street again past the wondering loungers, whom he did not see nor hear.

"Airin' his new duds," was the unanimous verdict.

When Waters again reached the spot where he had stopped before he stopped again, started nervously, stopped, pushed the sand about with his foot and again turned, slowly walking down the street, his head drooped, his lips moving with unspoken words.

All that day he was not seen again. Had the loungers witnessed the manner in which he spent that day public sentiment might have hinted at insanity. He sat upon a heap of sand near the river, at intervals tossing pebbles with infinite care into the muddy stream. "If I hit that bubble," he would mutter to himself, "she will; if I miss, she won't."

"She will—she won't—she will—she won't." The words ran persistently in his head like the fragments of a half-forgotten song.

For hours he sat with his elbows upon his knees and his face resting in his hands, gazing into the muddy water. At length he was aroused by an unusually large cluster of bubbles floating into the area of his vision. He grasped a stone at his feet and hurled it powerfully at the floating bubbles, as though he were striking at an imaginary foe.

The missile went wide of the mark.

Shaken with sudden and mysterious anger, Waters leaped to his feet and stalked toward the town. That evening in the late twilight a stumping

figure hurried through the dark back streets of the village toward the house of the widow, Mrs. Sprangs. Unfalteringly it approached a window from which a yellow shaft of light fell, cutting a space of kindness from the deepening gloom.

It was Waters. He stood in the shadow and looked within wistfully, as one hungry might look through the windows of a banquet hall. Mrs. Sprangs sat near the table reading. Her face had lost some of its weariness, and Waters was seized with a great joy. Near the woman sat Specks, also reading. The scene was like a draught of wine to the man without.

It was a far gaze from the Heights of Pisgah.

Waters approached the door, and placed his hand noiselessly upon the knob. He gripped it with a weakened hand, wavered in the act to turn the latch, then slowly removed his hand. As he did so, his gaze fell upon his wooden leg smitten with the shaft of light from the window. His heart sank. A cloud went across his dawn.

Slowly turning, he walked away, and did not look back until he was out of the village, with the open prairie about him. The first peep of the rising moon silvered the hilltops. Waters walked as in a dream, a dream of bitterness.

"Tain't no use," he muttered, "'tain't no use; she'd be ashamed of my kicker and my eye. Hain't no varnish that can varnish me."

After walking some time in silence, he suddenly found himself upon a bluff overlooking the far stretches of the Missouri, its turbid waters transmuted into silver with the moon which had cleared the horizon. Below him the river lay a glinting lake that narrowed with distance into a thread of tarnished silver extending into the mist.

As he gazed, the far cry of a pack of coyotes in the shadows of the hills shivered icily through the air, as though the cold and lonesome light had grown vocal. It was a cry of kinship to Waters. The instinct of the lonesome wild animal in a strange jungle seized him. Involuntarily he raised his face

to the sky, and answered the cry of the coyotes with a long, loud cry that was less than half human. The echoes came back faintly from the bluffs, and the heavy silence of the night returned.

As Waters gazed into the broad, translucent night a feeling of reverence shook him as a wind shakes a scrub oak clinging to a barren bluff. The bitterness of the man's heart died out. He extended his arms into the silvered night, and hurled his voice out into the empty spaces of the moonlit valley.

"Le' me be happy!" he cried.

But for the faint echoes of his own voice, the night seemed to contain only the cold glow of the moon. Involuntarily Waters knelt and hid his face upon his knees. He remained thus for a half-hour. Then he leaped to his feet as though a hand had touched him. Hope had returned, and there was a small rift in the cloud that hung across his dawn. Was it that he had heard or felt God?

Perhaps. Yet it was this thought that ran like a merry lilt in his brain:  
"I will send to St. Louis for a cork kicker!"

## VII

### THE CORK LEG

DURING the next week a southbound packet put in at Fort Calhoun. While drawing a glass of "Buried Treasure" for the captain Waters opened a conversation. He stated that he was interested in cork legs.

The conversation ended satisfactorily by Waters appointing the captain agent for the purchasing of a cork leg in St. Louis, and by placing an adequate sum in the hands of the captain, including purchase price and a liberal commission.

"I'll send her up by the first packet north," the captain said.

When the boat pulled out into the stream Waters stood on the landing, watching wistfully. He waited until the sound of the exhaust grew fainter and fainter, and died down a bend of

the river. Then he gazed abstractedly across the stretch of yellow water, watching the trail of smoke slowly fade into the blue sky.

That day was the beginning of a new and strange restlessness for Waters. Often he caught himself leaning idly across the bar while thirsty customers waited. Mentally he was viewing himself upon two legs that had real shoes at the ends of them.

Would the sun persist in sticking in the sky when it should have set hours before? Would the nights never pass? And why did the dawns lie so lazily in the east, when they should have been burning the zenith or racing down the incline of the evening?

Often, half unconsciously, Waters would wander down to the landing and gaze downstream, straining his eyes to catch the first far hint of smoke from a steamboat's funnels. Every sound startled him; he was constantly listening for the rumble of a steamer's whistle.

His senses of sight and hearing became abnormal. They monopolized his brain with torrents of false messages. He hardly felt or tasted or smelled—he heard and saw! Heard steamboat whistles, saw the smoke of funnels.

For weeks he lived in such suspense—the slave of the two usurping senses. In vain he strained his ears for the far rumble of the whistle; in vain he gazed for the thin trailing cloud of smoke in the south.

But one day, near the last of October, the cloud appeared and the whistle sounded. Waters was ecstatic. He threw his hat in the air, and shouted until he was hoarse. Then he laughed until he was sad, and a tear came into his eye. The grocery store joked that night over the supposed drunkenness of Waters.

It was late evening when the boat pulled into the landing. Waters was the first to put his foot on the gang-plank. The question which he put to the captain, and the manner in which he put it, convinced the crowd of listeners of the temulent condition of

the senior member of the firm of Waters & Co.

"Where's my leg?"

The captain remarked with a superior smile that he'd burn eternally if *he* knew; it surely was not fastened to *him*!

Waters slinked out of the crowd of merrymakers, who were preparing for a dance on board the "last boat up." The first and last boats of the season were events in the life of every little river town, and were received as such. This boat was on its way to the North, and would winter there.

The promised dawn of Waters died out like a flame unfed. He walked slowly up to the "Buffet," went in and turned the lock. Without lighting a lamp he went behind the bar, took a glass and sat down by a tapped keg of liquor. He ran the glass full and drank it at a swallow. This was followed by a half-dozen others.

"Tain't no use," he muttered feebly like a sick man; "tain't no damned use!" The distant sound of the fiddle and the shuffling of happy feet were heard from the boat.

"This here world was made for wolves at first," he mumbled but half audibly, for the kegs and the bar began to whirl in a giddy dance. Everything was dancing; the people were dancing on the boat; the very darkness was dancing around him.

"Made fer wolves," he reiterated with a dizzy swing to his voice; "but they chased all the wolves out, and things has been awk'rd ever since!" He grasped impotently at the whirling darkness; it wouldn't stand still, but spit impudently at him, derisively at him, with lurid sparks.

Life is a hunt for happiness. The game is scarce and the hunters are many. They who miss the game grumble because they have not found it. Men go a-hunting for happiness as they would go a-hunting for jack-rabbits, seeking it by its tracks. A few learn that happiness grows out, not in.

Waters had thrown all his hopes of happiness upon the attainment of a piece of cork.

As he gazed into the dizzy darkness,

it seemed that a brilliant light grew out of the shadow; and in the centre of the light as of an aureole, the face of Mrs. Sprangs, transfigured in divine beauty, bloomed slowly like a flower.

The light from the face smote him like a fist in anger, and he fell backward upon his elbows, trembling. As he stared, the brilliance faded into a melancholy gray, out of which a huge cork leg, as if fastened to a ponderous but invisible body, stalked toward him.

Impotent with terror, he heard the dull pounding of the approaching foot, like the beating of a fevered temple. On came the leg. It stepped upon his toes, strode up his leg, over his body, which at every step was racked with dull twinges of pain.

It stepped upon his throat and choked him. Its weight crushed him to the floor; and with a dull thud it planted its ponderous foot over his eyes. His brain ached with the weight; and then he saw no more, felt no more, until the gray of the dawn aroused him.

## VIII

### THE EPIC CRY

WINTER had shut in about Fort Calhoun—the lonesome, bitter Winter. There is nothing, perhaps, at once more majestic and hopeless than a prairie Winter when the country is new. In the Summer there is something so generous, so prodigal about the prairie. It gives its best lavishly. It is big-hearted and kindly careless; it is a benevolent giant, clothed with vast blue spaces, shaken with sudden anger, subdued with sudden pity.

It is this that makes the Winter terrible; the heart of the giant fails—a Titan's despair!

From a window of the "Buried Treasure Buffet" Waters had watched the failing of the mighty heart. He had gazed upon the hills that daily became more sere with the first frosts. He had gazed upon the river from the time the first ice began running until the stream was choked from bank to

bank and became as the pulseless artery of a perished Titan.

He saw all this, and he became kin to the great silent prairie, because his heart was bitter with a despair that was an echo of the great white despair without, mocked by the glitter of vast, silent, empty spaces.

Little by little he had drifted back to the old bitter consolation; back to the Zodiac with its one unfortunate sign. He drank much, said bitter things about the world, and constantly accused Aquarius. He had not visited at the home of Specks since early in the Fall. Whenever he found the face of Mrs. Sprangs growing up in his head when he closed his eye he invariably aroused himself and had another drink.

Even the cork leg, which would come with the first steamer in the Spring—surely it would come, but what the deuce was the difference!—even the leg had become a discarded fetish. To be sure, in his dreams it preached to him a winsome gospel of happiness, but Waters sneered it aside for a lying prophet when he awoke. Then he drank more than he wanted, said bitter things about the world, and constantly quarreled with his Aquarius. Who does not, secretly or otherwise, quarrel with some Aquarius?

One morning in early February Waters sat looking up the stretches of the river to the north, where the prairie hourly grew dimmer with the increasing scurry of fine, dry snow driven by a light southeast wind. As he sat gazing the door of the shack opened, admitting Specks and a bluster of snow.

"Hello, Specks!" cried Waters, attempting to be jovial; "goin' to blizzard, think?"

"Ma's sick!"

"Huh?"

"Ma's sick!" repeated the boy breathlessly and with an appeal in his eye. "She's about to die!"

"Huh? Sick?" Waters leaped to his feet, shaken with a strange mixed passion, including shame, pity, affection, sorrow. "About to die!" The words were so many heavy blows. As by a miracle, the long-rejected gospel of the

cork leg became convincing. The lying prophet was vindicated. The Summer with the teaching of the meadowlarks came back again.

"About to die!" The little weather-beaten cottage grew up very plainly before Waters. The face of a woman blossomed out in the mist that passed before his eyes. Why did it all seem so very near, just as it was about to pass away?

"Did the doctor say so?"

"There isn't any doctor nearer than Omaha City," Specks answered, "and nobody'll go because the road's too bad, and she'll die, Mr. Waters."

Waters breathed heavily.

"Maybe she's dying now!" exclaimed Specks nervously, as he dashed wildly out the door and disappeared in the spindrift of snow. Waters stood motionless, staring out upon the white stretch of river and bluff and prairie, like a man in a dream. He hardly thought; he was dazed.

Suddenly something out of the great white spaces went into his blood and shook him like a strong wind! It was the spirit of magnificent Defiance, the spirit of dauntless Strength, isolated and lonesome as a god; the same that filled the shriveled muscles of the returning Ithacan when he cast off the rags of his wanderings, and stood a naked, self-sufficient power before the craven suitor. It is the spirit that sleeps in all sublimity; in the immensity of the ocean, the vastness of the prairie, the magnitude of mountains; and when it becomes vocal in the terror of storms, of wars, of earthquakes, of pestilence, of all events that face mankind with great odds, it is the cry of the epic, and men are expanded into godhood by it.

The wind was whipping into the Northwest. With the fine snow that lay upon the ground, this meant much to one who knew the prairie. Waters wrapped himself carefully, drew on a pair of heavy mittens, placed a bottle of liquor in his pocket, and went out into the storm, locking the door of the shack behind him.

He had decided to walk to Omaha

City, a distance of about twenty-five miles down the river. He would get into Omaha by midnight, if the wind—if the wind . . .

The Northwest boomed with a sudden wild gust and swept the half-articulate words from his lips. It was the challenge! Waters heard and understood. He would battle with giants that day; great, white, pitiless giants; huge, volatile, writhing, biting, stinging, hissing giants!

A man is very small in a quiet prairie. He dwindle to a speck when it is in anger. Waters turned his back to the storm, without a thought of giving up the undertaking. The long-endured bitterness of heart had taught him the abandonment of self, and the cry had expanded him, filled him with the defiant joy of a fighter. He could not understand himself; the transformation was so strange and sudden. He felt no fear of that which he knew to be before him. The contemplation of the possible odds thrilled him.

The light snow scurried in long, white, snake-like streamers past him and hissed about his feet.

*Boom!* The Northwest had burst into a hurricane. It was the ultimatum of the Elements to the enemy—a man with one eye and a wooden leg!

The enemy tottered, floundered for a moment in the snow, blinded with the sudden fury of the attack, then set his teeth and trudged into the seething gray twilight of the storm.

A strange one-sided battle had begun. It was the violence of the Infinite sustained by the defiant Finite. Titan blows fell upon the pygmy. Man again wrestled with the Angel. Yet there was no eye to look into the narrow zone of battle hemmed with the writhing, sibilant snow-maze that conjured late evening in the realm of Noon.

It is easy to imagine the many elemental phenomena as being merely the human passions projected upon the larger canvas. A cyclone is sudden anger; a south wind is feminine tenderness; rainfall is grief; the Spring sunshine is love.

Madness is the conglomeration of all

passions. A blizzard is the madness of the Air! It has the blind fury of anger, the hiss of hate, the shout of joy, the dusk of melancholy, the shiver of fear, the cold sting of jealousy; and when its force is spent it wraps its victims in a shroud of white, which may be an act of love—a savage love.

A blizzard transforms. What it touches it leaves grotesque. It annihilates the boundary line of light and darkness. In its breath the night becomes merely a deepening of shadow upon the dim twilight of the day.

God wished to demonstrate to the world the awful tragedy of unbridled passions—and His precept was, the blizzard.

"Have to keep to the river!" muttered Waters, "have to keep to the river—to the river—to the river." The words went on running in his head. He trudged and floundered on for some time, perhaps hours, he did not know. In a blizzard even the sense of time is lost. Suddenly he was conscious of a stinging sensation on the left side of his face. He had been walking with his *left* side to the wind, whereas the wind blew *down the river!*

"Back to the wind, back to the wind, back to the—oh!" He had struck his head against a tree.

"A tree! I must be out in the bottoms east of the river," he thought confusedly. He tried to think clearly about the matter, but nothing would come clearly. He was dazed; his thoughts whirled dizzily even as the snow.

"Oh, yes," he muttered, as if with sudden inspiration, "back to the wind, back to the wind, back to the wind"; and he trudged off, stepping in time to the drone of his poor addled brain. After he had walked for hours and hours, as it seemed to him, still keeping step to the drone of his head with the feverish insistence of a maniac, he again ran against a tree. The shock aroused him. He fumbled about the trunk and with a sinking of the heart he thought that he recognized the same tree that he had struck before.

Breathless, he leaned against the tree and tried to think. Oh, yes, the liquor! It was the liquor he had been looking for all the time! Ah, strange that he had not thought of the liquor! He drank a great draught, and the delirium passed.

For the first time he noted that it was night. He must have been walking five hours—and where was he? "I'm lost—lost—lost—lost!" he muttered, stalking rapidly down the wind into the mad night. "Lost, lost, lost, lost!" He kept time to the terrible words.

Suddenly the writhing darkness ahead of him was illumined with a soft light, and in it grew the old vision—the weather-beaten cottage, the cheery sitting-room, the woman's face. Ah, the woman's face! Yes, it was *that* he was looking for; surely it was that and not the liquor, not the liquor!

As the light and vision were swirled away into the dizzy darkness, reality came upon Waters as a shout to one who is asleep. He was going after the doctor—to Omaha City—a doctor for Mrs. Sprangs! Again the buffeting of the storm maddened him. A great anger shook him. With his teeth set, and his back to the terrible wind, he strode into the storm. The rage of a fighter in the face of overwhelming odds was in his heart. He swore and struck at the storm with his clenched fist! He wished that the wind might materialize into a wild beast, that he might die with his teeth set in its neck!

But a blizzard is an anger without intelligence; a bodiless foe; an enemy without nerves. It knows not its strength of offense, and feels no blow of defense. It is irresistible and invulnerable.

Waters began to stumble and fall frequently. Once he fell upon his face, and was half persuaded to lie still. The wind's shout, however, would not let him sleep.

"The doctor! the doctor!" it shouted and roared and shrieked until he rose with difficulty and pushed on into the storm. Once his heart leaped with the joy of sudden hope. He saw

specks of fire before him! Surely they were the lights of Omaha City. He dashed on wildly, but the specks of fire were sucked away into the black vortex of the night.

Waters wanted to lie down and sleep, but the wind was so noisy with its shouting. Why would not the wind let him sleep? All about him were beds of down, warm, pleasant beds. But the wind went on shouting about the doctor, and he strode on.

Despair crept icily through his veins. There is a terrible strength and power of endurance in desperation. Hope avails to goad the limbs only until that moment when the limbs become feeble; then it vanishes and Despair fights Defeat! More heroes are the products of the probability of failure than of the possibility of success. It is the difference between the narcotic and the stimulant.

A time came when even the sense of despair left Waters. He felt nothing. He was simply a thought blown about the darkness on a pitiless wind, and that thought was about the doctor.

He laughed hysterically when in his delirium he saw the streets of Omaha City, up which he walked right to a door that had a doctor's name upon the plate. He put out his fist and knocked feebly. Then a sense of ease came over him. He lay down in front of the door and swooned deliciously into sleep. The wind shouted no more. It was quiet that he might sleep.

Early the next morning after the departure of Waters for Omaha City a man living upon the outskirts of Calhoun ventured out into the storm to go to the grocery store. As he pushed through the still-blinding flurries, he stumbled across the body of a man.

It was Waters. Bewildered by the storm he had traveled all afternoon and most of the night within a short radius of the village, and had fallen with exhaustion almost where he had started. His discoverer, with the aid of a neighbor, carried him to the grocery store.

"Think you can go right off, doc?" said Waters feebly, when at last he awoke from the lethargy of the cold. He looked up from the counter upon which he lay, and was surprised that he did not see the doctor's door with the name upon it. Instead, a half-dozen broadly grinning faces shone upon him.

"Come, now, Mr. Waters, don't be a-goin' off that a-way," said the grocery-man soothingly; "we all knows how a feller gits when he's—well, that, a-way!"

"How?" Waters interrogated peevishly.

"Well, now, Mr. Waters," continued the grocer in the wheedling tone one uses to a sick child, "well, now, you see, mebbe you hev been the least mite subject to spirits—that is, mebbe you'd been drinkin'. You see, we found you layin' out in the street under a snow bank. But you hain't hurt much; snow pertected you; you'll come 'round."

"What's that?" cried Waters. "Drunk? Kin a man walk to Omaha City in one night and git drunk, too? Who brung me here? I jest laid down by the doctor's door to sleep; awful tired; jest laid down to sleep, and here all you fellers is a-grinnin' at me. What's it mean?"

The grin widened, and one produced a half-emptied liquor flask. "This yourn?" said he.

Waters mumbled something about its being his flask, and that he had taken a drink by the tree. "Couldn't have got there without it," he muttered; "never would've found myself without it."

"B'lieve he's gettin' 'em?" whispered a lounger rather audibly to the grocer.

"Snakes!" returned the grocer with an assenting nod.

"You fellers is all damn fools!" cried Waters; "le' me up!" And to the surprise of all, the lately resuscitated arose and tottered out the front door.

When he arrived at the "Buried Treasure Buffet" he took a drink,

lit a fire, and discovered that his hands were aching and that several of his fingers and toes were numb.

"Must have laid out somewhere," he mused. "Funny—danged funny! Where'd they find me? Mebbe I was jest drunk; but no! I kin remember startin' fair and square enough; jest after Specks was here. Can't remember drinkin' any more after that."

Waters's head was dull, and he ached as a result of the exposure. Was he to believe himself or the loungers at the store? Had he really fought with the storm, or was it only the nightmare of a drunken sleep? He lit his pipe with difficulty, and tried to smoke, but the smoke didn't agree with him.

"Believe I'm sick," he said. His head ached; he felt stunned. He lay down upon a couch near the stove, and an hour later was awakened from a feverish doze by the entrance of Specks.

"Ma's almost well!" Specks announced joyously. "She's glad now we didn't send for the doctor."

Waters looked in a peculiar dazed way at the boy.

"You sick, Mr. Waters?" he asked, his spirits falling as he drew near the couch.

"Caught little cold, Specks, jest a little cold like." He took the boy's hand in his. "Did Waters ever lie to you that you knowed of, Specks?" he said slowly. The boy's head shook a violent negative. "Well, yesterday, after you was here, I went to Omaha City after doc; bad storm, Specks! Never see the like. It was hell froze! But I got there, Specks, and I told doc; didn't he come?"

A shadow of embarrassment went over the face of the boy and he looked down his nose.

"How'd I git back, Specks? Tell me that. How'd I git back?"

"You're sick, Mr. Waters," said Specks. "Don't you think you'd ought to sleep?"

Waters, with eyes strangely dimmed, stared long at the boy and then said feebly: "A feller won't lie to his crony, Specks." He closed his eyes and went off into a restless sleep.

Waters was sick two weeks and Specks took faithful care of his crony.

But the epic cry—it had dwindled into village gossip.

## IX

### THE FIRST BOAT

If you ever knew how to whistle a merry tune, it is hard to avoid remembering it when the ice breaks up and booms down swollen channels, and when the first thunder shakes the sky, and the mixed scent of rain and new grass is everywhere.

Waters startled himself one sunny Spring morning by whistling a gay tune. It was the first act of the kind since the last boat came up in the Fall. Later on in the day, as he waited for custom behind the bar, he suddenly made a discovery. The whistled tune had changed into the air of an old love song which he had whistled the preceding Summer when the blue sky was very near and the meadowlarks said tender things.

The human heart is a garden marvelously fertile. The weeds of bitterness grow there, but at certain seasons a smile or an old tune or a kind word will make the weed plot flare with the bloom of Summer.

The softly whistled air spread a flame of bloom in the heart of Waters. He began to calculate how long it would be before the river would be open; and how long after that it would be before the first steamboat could land at Calhoun with his cork leg; and how long after that it would be before he could learn to use it well enough to make a call upon Mrs. Sprangs; and how long after that it would be until—and at this point he took up the broken thread of his whistled air with undue diligence.

Again he began to spend a great deal of time sweeping the southern horizon for a trail of smoke, and straining his ears for the first far whistle of a north-bound packet.

The Spring was far into May when the

boat arrived. Among the things which it put off at the landing was a long, round package addressed to "Mr. Waters, Mgr. Waters & Co., Fort Calhoun, N. T." Waters pounced upon the package and hurried it to the "Buffet," locking himself in. Then he untied the bundle, and his sunrise began again with a great streamer of light. It was his cork leg!

He slowly unbuckled his wooden leg, removed it, gazed upon it, then leaned it against the wall.

"Good-bye, old feller," he said, "don't think I'm casting you off in my prosperity. But you see, Stumpy, a feller's got to progress on'ard and up'ard. You've been a good leg to me, if you was allus hombly. And then—mebbe I'll come back to you—mebbe I'll come back."

The one notch carved near the upper end of the old leg seemed to Waters to assume the intelligence of a reproachful eye. "Mebbe I'll come back," he muttered again. Then he began carefully to fit on the cork leg.

When the night had fallen, he went down to the river and indulged in the most abandoned capers; walking, galloping, running, jumping, by way of practice, preliminary to his public appearance upon the morrow.

The result of the practice was so satisfactory that he decided upon the next Sunday for the completion of his sunrise, which had lingered so long. During the whole week Waters was the talk of the village again, and the effect of the new sensation was felt at the "Buffet" in increased daily receipts.

Upon the following Sunday morning, dressed in his best, Waters went out with the intention of going at once to the home of Mrs. Sprangs. At noon he returned to the "Buffet" no nearer to his object than in the morning. All afternoon he endeavored to drive himself to the door of the weather-beaten cottage, but returned to his shack in the evening, dejected.

Then he spent several hours examining his face in a hand mirror, and began wondering if there were any glass eyes in St. Louis! When he fell asleep he

did not rest, but busily all the night chased recalcitrant glass eyes that would not remain in place, but rolled away provokingly—always a little out of reach—just a little out of reach.

## X

## THE SECOND BOAT

ONE evening in early June there was an unusual attendance at the grocery store convention. A steamboat had arrived from the South that afternoon, and everybody was talking at once.

"They say he brought back a fortune, too!"

"Who?"

"Hain't you heard? W'y, Bill Sprangs, the widder's husband!"

"He's been gone nigh onto ten years. Been prospectin' out West."

"Thought he was dead!"

"So'd the widder."

"What'll Waters do now?"

"Dunno."

The talk went on far into the night. That night Waters did not go to bed. By the light of a candle he sat bent over a sheet of writing-paper. Several hours elapsed before he folded the paper and placed it in an envelope. Yet this was all he wrote:

MY DEAR CRONY: I'm going to take to the

river again. Be good to yourself and do what you are a mind with the treasure. It's yours. So is all the money I've got. It's hid under the big rock that you know about. Going up to Fort Benton with the next boat out of the city. Be back next Spring mebbe.

WATERS.

P. S. This was wrote at midnight.

After sealing and addressing the envelope, he went out and dropped the letter in the box of the grocery store post-office. Then he returned to the "Buffet," placed a large flask of whisky in his pocket, put his old wooden leg under his arm, and blowing out the light, he went out and locked the door.

When he had reached the river landing he looked carefully about him, and finding himself alone in the silent, starlit night, sat down upon a coil of rope and unbuckled his new cork limb. Then he sighed, fitted his old wooden leg (with its one notch) to the accustomed stump, and buckled it tight.

He then did that which would have been incomprehensible to an observer if there had been any. He grasped the cork leg by the foot, whirled it rapidly about his head until it whirred dismally in the silence, and flung it far out into the stream.

He watched it floating in the muddy swirl until it was lost in the shadows.

Then he stumped away southward into the night.



## THE DIFFERENCE

By Carolyn Wells

A H! heavy is my heart,  
Or light as any feather,  
If we're alone, apart,  
Or we're alone together.

## KITTY'S CAREER

By Willis Boyd Allen

IT was about a year ago, I think, when Kitty conceived the brilliant idea of earning her living. Just why a young person whose father's income was popularly indicated by five, if not six, figures should feel it incumbent upon her to work for cash returns, was not clear. Her friends ridiculed, expostulated, scolded; but Kitty was firm. I was the only one who shook her resolution for a moment. I agreed with her and praised her noble resolve. This nearly induced her to throw the whole business over, as I had foreseen, but in the end she persevered.

"Woman," said Kitty, with a little frown and a far-off look, "woman should assert herself, and not consent to remain a mere toy. Her attributes are—well?" she demanded, seeing my intent gaze.

"Blue," I said thoughtlessly. "Blue, with just a flash of gray." I had been looking at her eyes. "Ah," I added humbly, "I am afraid I did not quite follow you. You were saying—?"

Kitty swept from the room, as majestically as five-feet-one, with curly brown hair, and dimples, can effect that movement, returning a moment later, with a characteristic little rush to remind me of the Mansfield tickets for Thursday evening.

Well, Kitty had her way. She invested in "moist colors" and tiny "pans," brushes, palette and various other paraphernalia; and in the course of a fortnight hinted rather timidly, when I was calling one Winter afternoon that some of her work was already "on sale" at Slocum's.

Of course, I dropped in at Slocum's next day, and with a well-assumed air

of indifference asked to be shown water-color sketches. There were three of Kitty's. I will not describe them in detail. They represented—I am not quite sure what they represented, beyond a tremendous effort to produce a marketable commodity. Her trees, dear girl, were a little too much like cabbages, and her figures seemed to have been modeled on the pattern of Noah and his family, as portrayed in the arks sold to children in toy-shops. But I bought two of the pictures, having studied them through my curved hands, to appear as connoisseur-like as possible, and took them away with me.

"Do you mind leaving your name, sir?" asked the salesman, eying me, I thought, with some curiosity, as I laid down four ten-dollar bills.

"Oh, I think I'll not—" I began hastily. "You may tell Miss—Thurston, is it?—that the pictures were bought by a gentleman from St. Louis." (I had been in St. Louis when Kitty was about two years old.)

The joy, the triumphant delight of that girl, when I called a few days later!

"Sold, sir; sold to a gentleman from St. Louis!"

"What is sold?" I queried innocently.

"Two of my pictures! Oh, the dear old thing! I could hug him!"

I wished I had bought all three.

"How do you know he was old?"

"Oh, the man said he was; awfully old, I guess. Anyway, he must be rich, buying pictures that way, so far from home."

I mentally vowed revenge on the man at Slocum's.

"And what do you suppose I am

going to do next?" proceeded my young lady.

"That is what no mortal ever yet succeeded in guessing," I said rather ill-humoredly. "Isn't it about time for you to give the thing up?"

"Give it up? I'm going—although you don't deserve to be told, sir!" (as if she could help telling!) "I'm going to paint in oils."

"Oils?"

"Yes, oils. I'm going to do portraits. They say portrait painters get five hundred or a thousand dollars for a single head. I have a career before me, sir!"

I gasped, and turned the gasp into a cough. It is difficult to keep up with Kitty, when she's fairly started.

"Considering the number of years usually devoted to the study of figure painting," I ventured, "aren't you a little—just a little—?"

"Not failure, but low aim, is crime!" sang Kitty to a tune of her own, as she pirouetted about the room. "Wait till you see. Of course I must take a few lessons."

"A few," I assented feebly.

"And I shall pay for them with the money I earned by my water-color work. I shouldn't wonder if the third one—there were three, you know—was sold already."

I vaguely thought of disguising myself with a beard, and purchasing the third picture as a man from St. Petersburg.

"Somehow I feel so happy today!" Kitty ran on. "I feel— Oh, as if my knight were 'riding through the wood' toward me, as they do in fairy-tales."

"Your knight, Kitty?" I could not keep just a bit of pain out of my voice.

"Why, yes. Nothing short of a knight will do for me, if you please! He must be gay, and brave, and handsome—"

"And young!" I supplied, setting my teeth under a mustache that had three gray hairs in it. Forty-one had not seemed so very old that morning as I sat with my cigar, looking at Kitty's dear little sprawls of sketches, every tree-cabbage of which I loved for the

dainty fingers that had lingered over them. But now I felt like a patriarch.

"And young!" I said bitterly enough. "Oh, of course," dimpled Kitty. "Think of the man who bought my pictures being a knight, on horseback, with a spear!"

I laughed. "That *would* be absurd! A cane and a pair of spectacles are what *he* needs!"

Kitty flashed a curious look at me. "Don't go," she said, as I rose. "Stay to tea. Mother will be glad to have you stay."

Did she guess how she had unconsciously wounded me? Did she mean, in her womanly little way, to gain time and set matters right?

I shook my head. "Thank you," I said, "I must go. Good night, Kitty!"

She gave me her hand. "Good night," she said gently, with the same curious look in her gray-blue eyes. "Come again very soon and"—here her spirits rose again—"and see how I'm getting on!"

It was a month before I called again. I was shown up at once to Kitty's "studio," the room she had arranged for her work. I found the artist attired in a long blue-check apron, but looking discouraged. Her hand left a dab of ivory-white and rose madder on mine, and there was an unmistakable patch of cadmium on her dear little nose where she had inadvertently touched it with her brush. A bare canvas was before her on the easel.

"It's dreadfully hard," she sighed, with a somewhat indignant glance at the canvas. "I had no idea!"

Kitty drooping is harder for me to resist than Kitty triumphant. Her dimples and the corners of her mouth melted into all sorts of beseeching little curves. Her eyes were suspiciously bright. I saw that she had failed, and knew it; and I longed to take her into my arms, palette, brush, much-bedaubed apron, painty little nose and all, and comfort her. But I remembered in time, and fortified myself to enact the elderly and benevolent friend.

"Too bad!" I murmured. "It is

hard, and I know you have tried with all your might."

Kitty unconsciously swayed toward me.

"You've been gone so long!" she pouted; but not very vivaciously, I thought.

Suddenly she cried out, "I've thought of something splendid! I'll paint *you!*"

"I'm afraid I'm a difficult—"

"No, I'm *sure* I can do you. Please sit in that chair—so!"

She arranged various screens, and then tried me by adjusting my head at different angles.

"Won't this do, Kitty?" I said at last in desperation, after several experiments with my hands.

"Well, perhaps. Of course I'm only to make a sketch, you know. You must sit perfectly still."

"May I talk while you work?"

"Oh, yes. That will give you an animated expression."

Whereupon the young artist drew off a bit and surveyed me with a little scowl. I felt like a lay figure.

Then she began to draw, murmuring to herself such cabalistic formulae as, "Three noses high and two noses wide. Twice the length of the ear—no, three times—which is it?" Then, "Oh, what a dreadful eye!" or "Where is that sepia?" All the time making little *moues*, in her absorption, that were, like the manipulation of her hands, trying.

We did not talk much after all. Once I reverted to the topic of our last conversation. "Has the knight arrived, Kitty?"

She flushed a little before she answered, and made some energetic strokes on her drawing.

"It's hardly time, is it?" she said at length.

"I suppose it depends on the horse," I replied inanely, without the least idea of what I was saying. The pain had all come back again. She was so sweet, so winsome, so dear—I wanted Kitty! But she was for the knight, and the sober, plodding old fellow must go back to his work alone.

At last she seemed to have finished. She surveyed her work rather anxiously, yet with a funny twinkle in her eyes.

"May I see it?" I prepared to rise.

"Oh, not yet!" she cried, flushing even more rosily than before and checking me with a gesture. "It really doesn't look much like you, but it's the very last portrait I ever shall paint. I've given it up, you know."

"But it isn't fair not to let me see my own picture," I said, mustering a laugh.

"Wait a minute—just a minute, please!" She slowly retreated toward the door, as if to obtain a better view of the painting. Then she threw the brush into a corner, covered her face with her hands, and ran into the hall.

"You can look now!" she called out, from the staircase.

What was there in her voice that made my heart leap?

I sprang to my feet and turned the easel round.

Oh, Kitty, Kitty! Could it be true? She had painted, in her childish way, a horse, bearing a knight in full armor. I knew it was a horse because of his mane and tail; and I knew it was a knight because he carried a huge and formidable spear. But the face—the face of the knight was my own!



**T**EACHER—What is the feminine of Frederick, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE—Frederica.

"Right. And what is the feminine of Patrick?"

"Bridget."

## DISILLUSIONED

DEDICATED MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER TO

A DOBSON  
LANG

By John Kendrick Bangs

YE ladies of ye ancient days  
Wore always buckled shoon,  
To set the gallant's heart ablaze—  
Inspiring him to spoon:  
And I—poor wight of ignorance!—  
Had ever the idea  
That shoon were bits of elegance,  
Though what was never clear.

At first I thought my lady wore  
Her shoon about her throat,  
Though what the deuce 'twas buckled for  
I never chanced to note;  
And next when Strephon bold confest  
His Phyllida wore hers  
Beneath the Winter moon, I guessed  
They were a set of furs.

Next time I saw them celebrate,  
In doating love-song placed,  
The context seemed to indicate  
She wore them round her waist;  
From which 'tis easy for to see  
The reason why I felt  
This buckled shoon must surely be  
A sort of dainty belt.

Then once again I read of it,  
And what the Poet said  
Led me to look it up a bit—  
'Twas worn on Chloe's head.  
And so, alas! I've learned the truth:  
These shoon of lofty lines  
Are nothing more nor less, forsooth,  
Than ancient number nines!

## A FOUNTAIN SEALED

By van Tassel Sutphen

"**I**T can't be, Phil."

Miss Girard had it in mind to declare herself still further; she would be very gentle and yet decided. Then she caught the expression on the man's face and stopped. Was it really Philip van Courtland who was looking at her?

"What is it, Fleda?" he asked.

The girl regarded him soberly. "I didn't know that anybody could care so much—well, about anything," she said.

"You didn't know!"

"Have I got to explain?"

"Don't you think you should?"

"There have been other men," said Miss Girard reflectively, "who have asked me that same question; yes, and received the same answer. Some of them have laughed and turned away and the rest have turned away without laughing. There doesn't seem to be much difference in that."

"There isn't."

"Of course; I was sure of it. But with you—"

"Go on, Fleda."

"It was as though you had invited me to enter a certain room—the one in which you really lived. There was a blank wall at the farther end, but suddenly a window opened in it revealing leagues and leagues of unknown distance. I looked and it thrilled me. Oh, I don't mean that I have changed my mind; you won't misunderstand me?"

"No."

"Not that I could distinguish anything clearly; perhaps it was just the indefinable bigness of it all that fascinated. Then I thought of my own soul—

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house—the one in which I live. It has no windows at all, merely a succession of pier-glasses reflecting innumerable Fledas. And I envied you, Phil."

"But if you have never tried to look out?"

The girl frowned. "What should I see but just my everyday, tiresome, little world? The old familiar set pieces—the park, a ball-room, an Italian garden. The same people appearing on the scene, with the same smiles and bows and then departing just as they have done a thousand times before. Don't I know it all without looking?"

"So you prefer the pier-glasses and your own company indefinitely multiplied?"

"Well, at least I'm nice to look at and I can yawn in my own face without being impolite."

"Dull for you and lonely for me. Now it does seem—"

"You mustn't, Phil. There isn't a bit of use in beginning that over again. I've known you all my life and, honestly, there's no one I like half so well. But we're both of us poor and—and I couldn't trust myself."

"I wouldn't let anybody else say that."

"Oh, well, not in the sordid sense, perhaps; I don't mean that I am dependent upon furs and diamonds and motor cars. But I'm in love with life, its bigness and its fulness. I want my chance, the opportunity to do things."

"Chances, opportunities! There's your modeling, your music."

"The faithful wounds of a friend. You're right, of course; I don't accomplish anything. Why?"

"Isn't it because you look upon your art as something entirely outside yourself? It amuses you to play tricks with it and up to a certain point you succeed; you're quite clever enough. But it isn't you and so it doesn't count."

"Art the expression of oneself! But, Phil, we don't believe that nowadays. It sounds so amateurish and silly."

"I don't care; it's true. Isn't the soul of Beethoven a greater thing than the *Sonata Appassionata*? Yes, and greater than the sum of all his work put together. It's because he never could express himself fully that he had to go on and on, piling Pelion upon Ossa, and in the end failing more gloriously than anyone else has succeeded."

The girl shifted her position impatiently. "Well, granted that one has anything to express," she said at length.

"There always is something if you are willing to pay for the self-knowledge. The price is work, Fleda, and tears; yes, and drops of blood if it comes to that. You can't manufacture a touchstone out of common things."

"I'm not sure that I want that kind of power. It's something to be able to dazzle the world's eyes."

"Such a paltry something, Fleda. And it doesn't satisfy."

"Oh, I know that, and you might have added that it doesn't even amuse for long. Why do I go on, then? Just because I must keep deceiving my miserable pier-glass replicas. Otherwise I should be living in a Bedlam."

"There is the real Fleda—" "I hate her," interrupted Miss Girard defiantly. "I suppose I must acknowledge that she exists somewhere, but I keep her out of sight. She is an uncomfortable person; she makes the most ridiculous demands upon me."

"And you won't give in?" "Not if I can help it. And I think I can."

There was an interval of silence broken by the girl's nervous laugh. "So you realize, Phil," she said, "what a perfectly horrid creature we have discovered in Fleda Girard. You ought

to rest devoutly thankful that you have escaped her."

Van Courtland considered. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "Marry Lawrence?"

"Who knows? He has sixty thousand a year, and that spells opportunity; yes, and protection from the disagreeable pin-pricks of existence. I loathe shabby gloves and smelly trolley-cars."

"Then, if I had sixty thousand—"

"Don't talk nonsense, Phil, and you shouldn't have said such a thing to me, anyway. I have some shreds of decency left."

Van Courtland rose to go. "I suppose I'll see you when you return from Washington," he said.

"Why, of course." Her voice shook and he glanced up quickly.

"No, Phil. It was only that we had been good friends for so long and now you must think— Well, I did feel something of what you wanted me to feel, if only for that one moment. I have to tell you this to even up." She faced him steadily, arrogantly. "But I wasn't worth it. Good-bye."

Mrs. Wadleigh's ball was a tremendous crush, but van Courtland knew of a certain alcove in the library where the gentle art of conversation was still possible of practice. Fleda had given him the supper dance, and upon its conclusion he piloted her to the desired haven.

"What shall I get you?"

"Just half a glass of champagne."

"You ought to eat something. You look fagged."

"I don't want it."

Mr. van Courtland smiled tolerantly and presently returned with the desired refreshment. "Well?" he asked significantly.

"Nothing in particular. I went it like mad in Washington and enjoyed myself enormously."

"H'm! Now I have something to tell. The incredible has occurred."

"Really?"

"Did you ever see a *Palais Royal* farce? Well, the 'uncle from America' has arrived."

"How exciting!"

"My Uncle Balthasar! Isn't the very name suggestive?"

"Of unlimited opulence?"

"Precisely. Mr. Gregory was my mother's brother, you know, and thirty years ago he went to Brazil to seek his fortune. Now, every night he rolls in gold, or would do so, if he didn't happen to prefer the comfort of an ordinary bed. Coffee and rubber and glittering Amazonian concessions that outstrip the dreams of the Orient. And this delightful relative is not only long on cash but also short on nephews. Behold my opportunity."

"Phil van Courtland, you are too provoking. Put that *vol-au-vent* away instantly and tell me."

"In three words. I am adopted."

"Never!"

"I swear it. We met and were mutually enchanted. Possibly, because we were determined to be pleased with each other; but that does not alter the happy fact. Fleda, my good, golden, generous uncle has actually settled on me an annual allowance of six thousand dollars. Do you comprehend, in the least degree, what that means? Now, I am free from the hackwork of a daily newspaper artist; I can go to Paris and take up my studies again. This morning I routed out my old color tubes and looked at them with tears in my eyes. Positively I had forgotten what rose madder was like."

"Phil, I am glad, so very glad."

"Of course, and you are the first human being that I have told. But I'm not through yet—there's something else."

Mr. van Courtland gazed thoughtfully at the serried ranks of the Encyclopedia Britannica as though seeking counsel from that universal fount. "Shall I go on?" he asked at length.

"By all means."

"Naturally, Uncle Balthasar pumped me pretty dry. Finally, he wanted to know if I were engaged to be married or had any such step in mind. I said yes and he approved—best possible thing for a young man and all that. I

might have asked him why he had never considered it advisable for himself, but of course I didn't. They always talk that way. Well, the upshot is that he has offered to raise me to twelve thousand if I marry. I told him that I would make inquiry and report at once."

Miss Girard drank her champagne at a gulp. "Now, Phil," she began weakly.

"I know that twelve thousand doesn't cut much of a figure alongside of sixty, but after all, Fleda, it would provide clean gloves and hansom cabs. It will stretch a bit, too, in Paris."

The girl's face was averted, but he could see the delicate contractions in her throat. Van Courtland went on hurriedly.

"I suppose it is quite necessary that you should marry someone. I don't want to say anything disagreeable about your father—"

"Papa has his club, and the keeping of the house in Twentieth street is a great expense for him. If he would only dine at home."

"But he won't. Nothing will ever change Mr. Girard, and so for you, Fleda, it is Lawrence—or me."

Miss Girard stared immovably at the book-shelves before her.

"It isn't a question of just five times twelve, dear," continued van Courtland. "I know that without your telling me, and I also know that you were in deadly earnest when you turned me down a month ago. It is simply that Uncle Balthasar's favor makes me a possibility and I assent to the reasonableness of your point of view."

"You make me feel as though I were standing on the auction block," interrupted the girl coldly.

"I didn't intend to hurt you, Fleda. We threshed this out pretty thoroughly once before."

"And got nothing but chaff; have you forgotten that?"

"Listen, Fleda. It doesn't matter in the least what you say or think about yourself; it's what I believe that counts. And I want you."

"Me! A woman who deliberately

threw you over because you had no money. Yes, and who would do it again if it were necessary. You can't be *quite* mad, Phil."

"I am afraid I am, if that is what you call it. I should want you, Fleda, even if I knew that I could only keep you for one single moment out of all time. Love is always willing to pay for more than it gets or it wouldn't be the real thing."

"I don't, I can't pretend——"

"You needn't. Mine is the venture and mine the gain—or the loss. Will you, Fleda?"

"Oh, here you are!"

Lawrence, a man somewhat older than van Courtland, stood at the entrance to the alcove, observing the tête-à-tête with a coldly critical eye. "There's to be an extra turn before the cotillion," he continued. "May I have the pleasure?"

"So sorry," answered Fleda, rising, "but I have just given it to Mr. van Courtland. Do hurry, Phil; it's a two-step."

"Look at me," whispered van Courtland as they swung out on the floor. But she would not. "I'll take it for granted, then," he insisted.

There was no answer, yet he was satisfied.

The next day van Courtland managed to get away from the office early and Fleda was waiting for him near the Plaza entrance to the Park.

"This is to be our wonderful week," he explained as they walked along. "No one is to know until Uncle Balthasar returns from Montreal. I sent a wire last night telling him that I had found the right princess—no names mentioned, you understand. And here's his answer just received: 'Report approved and ordered on file, B. G.' Isn't he a brick, and oh, Fleda, I never dreamed that I could be so utterly, so extravagantly happy."

"Phil," said the girl humbly, "I'll do my best. I do want to be good to you."

"I owe your father and Lawrence a thousand thanks," went on van Courtland as lightly as he could. "If

one hadn't pushed and the other pulled, the result would never have been Philip Harrison van Courtland. Don't think I am quarreling with my half loaf. I'm a conjurer and I'll turn it into a whole one before I get through. No; I'll have cake, bridal cake. It's just as easy when you know how."

Truly it was a wonderful week. Van Courtland's time still belonged to the office, but he managed to appropriate a few odd hours and Fleda never seemed to find them impossible nor even inconvenient. One of Phil's especially busy days they actually walked to Claremont before breakfast and Miss Girard waxed enthusiastic over the sunrise, an unwonted spectacle. Then there were luncheons in queer little restaurants off Washington Square where one took friendly counsel with Monsieur anent the *plat du jour* and joked with Madame over the perennial freshness of her pink hair-ribbons. And Black Peter, the house cat, who attended upon favored guests at the fish course—was there ever such a deliciously engaging feline! Also Marc, the head-waiter, who, having served his conscription in the "African Chasers," could make the most delectable coffee with no more scientific paraphernalia than a rusty skillet. Fleda enjoyed all the little experiences to the full, for life was rather dull in the old-fashioned house in Twentieth street that Mr. Girard never entered except to sleep or to dress for his club dinner.

Best of all was the night when Phil took her to an East Side Hungarian restaurant where they ate *goulash* to the inspiring rhythm of the *Marche de Rakoczy* and Fleda found reasonable occasion for the airing of her beloved German. Afterward they went to the Rivington street Settlement, it being Phil's tour of duty with the boys' club. Fleda sang "Robin Adair" and "Meath Water" and was enthusiastically acclaimed.

"I never heard you sing like that before," said van Courtland as they walked home. "I was watching one little chap and his eyes were wet."

Fleda flushed. "Do you remember," she said, "the old woman in Mother Goose who had the adventure with a mischievous peddler and a pair of shears? 'This surely be'ant I?'"

"Isn't it, though?" retorted her lover triumphantly and gave her arm a little squeeze.

"Fleda."

"Yes."

"Uncle Balthasar is coming down from Montreal tonight. I'll see him at luncheon and make my full confession. Will you be at home in the evening?"

"Yes."

"I'll drop in about half-after eight and I dare say the fairy uncle will want to come along. So look your very nicest. I like that green frock with the lace Alice—"

"Bertha."

"Well, whatever its name is. Don't forget now."

"Uncle Balthasar may not care for green."

"Oh, yes, he will," returned Mr. van Courtland confidently. "He is prepared to see everything through my eyes and you can't go wrong. I dare say he will insist upon announcing it immediately. He'll be so inordinately proud and happy that he won't be able to keep in."

"It shall be just as you wish, Phil."

"And yet I somehow hate to have anyone else know," he went on slowly. "It has been such a wonderful week, dear."

They had reached the house and van Courtland, fumbling around with the latchkey, may not have noticed that she made no reply. Yet when the good night had been uttered she put up her lips of her own accord; it was the first time that she had done so, and his heart leaped.

"Tomorrow evening," he called back gaily as he ran down the steps.

Fleda, in Nile-green chiffon, waited before the sea-coal fire in the library. The hands of the clock pointed to a quarter of nine and she wondered a

little; then she heard the ring of the doorbell.

Van Courtland was not in evening dress and he looked pale and worn. "Are you alone?" asked Miss Girard as she went forward to meet him.

"Yes," he answered constrainedly. He pulled up a chair and sat down. Fleda regarded him with solicitude. "Has it been a long day at the shop?" she said. "And I don't like that ugly V over your eyebrows; I am going to rub it out." She bent forward and laid a cool little palm on his forehead.

"Don't."

She drew her hand away. "I beg your pardon," she said coldly. Then, moved in spite of herself by the pain in his eyes, "What is it, Phil?"

"It's my uncle, of course," he answered desperately. "They were bosom friends at one time—your father and my Uncle Gregory. You didn't know that and no more did I."

"Just what happened I haven't been told and I don't suppose it makes any particular difference—except to us."

"It must have been the bitterest sort of a quarrel, though, to have smoldered for thirty years; it flashed out at the first mention of your name. 'Not Tom Girard's daughter?' asked my uncle. I tried to go on and explain, but he pulled me up short. 'Tom Girard's daughter,' he repeated, and a red spot came out on either cheekbone. Then I knew.

"There isn't a bit of use in trying to put what followed into pleasant phrases. He simply gave me an alternative—either I must expect nothing whatever from him or I must give you up. I wonder if he really imagined that I could be such a cur," continued van Courtland bitterly. "But, of course, he didn't know."

"All the circumstances, you mean? No, of course not."

Miss Girard had spoken with cool dispassionateness. Now she sat up very straight and looked at van Courtland. But he kept on gazing miserably into the heart of the fire.

"What did you tell him?"

"What could I say but that the decision rested with you?"

"Naturally." The girl's voice was hard.

Van Courtland laughed mirthlessly. "My good uncle," he went on, "doubtless imagined that he was giving me a choice between love and poverty—Hobson's choice. Not that I am blaming you, Fleda; you gave me fair warning."

"Assuredly."

Van Courtland rose. "We may as well lay this over until tomorrow," he said. "Neither of us is quite in the mood to see things clearly this evening."

"Perhaps not," she agreed.

"We were going to meet anyway at the Cuylers' tea. Will you be there about five?" He buttoned up his top-coat and drew on his gloves with an affectation of extreme care.

"Five o'clock will suit me perfectly."

"Very good." He picked up his hat and stick. "It's been a wretched business all the way through," he said gloomily. "I've only succeeded in making you uncomfortable; I won't say unhappy. But you'll forgive me."

"That is understood. Good-bye?"

The door closed upon the lovely vision, a slim, haughtily erect figure draped in gauzy clouds of palest green. "Undine herself," thought van Courtland as he went out into the night. "Only Undine wished that she might possess a soul."

Fleda listened for the closing of the door. "Now if he had trusted me," she said to herself. "Would that have made a difference—all the difference?"

A dull, gray morning, but it consorted with van Courtland's mood; a fine day would only have served to emphasize Nature's indifference to the sufferings of her children. Do not the majority of suicides take place on days when the skies are bluest, the sun shining most brightly?

Van Courtland rang for his letters. Among them lay a square envelope addressed to him in Fleda's handwriting.

"We are not foolish children," it began, "and your Uncle Gregory is plainly an irre-

concilable. You must go to Paris, as you have planned, for your art is your life work—that, at least, will never fail you.

"I want you to succeed and I know you will. A mistake made now would ruin you and its future realization would be unendurable for each of us. And life is a long, long road; remember that if you are disposed to think too hardly of me.

"I sha'n't be at the Cuylers', after all for Mr. Lawrence is going to drive the 'Yellow Boy' to the Country Club this afternoon and I am booked for the box seat. F. G."

Van Courtland tore the note into carefully graduated ribbons. "She might have been honest enough to speak the truth," he thought savagely. He picked up a newspaper and scanned the sailing lists. "I can make the Tuesday boat," he determined.

Much is possible in the course of two years and, with the foundations already laid, van Courtland could work at top pressure; they were beginning to talk about his portraits. Toward the middle of June he decided to lock up his studio and take a vacation. He could afford it easily enough, for his uncle, Mr. Gregory, had died suddenly during the Winter and van Courtland was a rich man. A superfluous blessing, as he sometimes deemed it, but now that the old man was dead van Courtland tried to put away any bitterness attaching to his memory. After all, the real treachery had been another's; he must not forget that. Finally, he had his work and that should mean much to a man; everything indeed, if the philosophers were to be trusted. He went to London.

One day an announcement of an auction at Christy's caught his eye—the collection of a famous Anglo-American millionaire was to be sold this Saturday afternoon, and he dropped in at the King street rooms. Being a wealthy man he could afford to gratify the passing fancy.

It was a small bronze head and the catalogue merely listed its title, "A Man in Pain." But the artist's sign manual was there on the base, the clear impression of a star between a pair of wings. The original had been a cartouche taken from the tomb of an Assyrian king and van Courtland him-

self had given it to Fleda Girard. It was during that wonderful week and he knew it instantly; he was sure that there could be no other in the world just like it.

"A Man in Pain." The artist in van Courtland recognized the truth and strength of the conception—how good the straining muscles in the throat, the tense wrinkling of the brow over the shadowed eyes. "A Man in Pain!"—it might have been Dante himself, he who had been in hell, and from whom the Florentine street boys shrank back affrighted as he passed them on his solitary way.

"She has found herself," he said half aloud, and then the man in him awoke, stabbed into the full consciousness of what the miracle might mean. Was it indeed better that this should come too late rather than not at all? Only there was Lawrence now—yes, now and always; one must accept facts as they exist. He tried to be generous and he recalled the selfishness of the father, the insistence of that other lover. How was one weak woman to stand between them? Yet if she had but cared—ah, Fleda!

The sale was on and van Courtland gave his order to a commissioner. The bronze became his property in due course and, having only a few shillings on him, he was obliged to tender a cheque in payment. "I desire, however, that my name shall not be known," he explained, and the assurance was readily given.

Outside, he came face to face with Lawrence. There had never been even the pretense of friendship between them, but Lawrence was bored and he wanted somebody to take luncheon with him.

"They have some genuine Chesapeake oysters at Fritz's," insisted Lawrence. "Now be a decent chap for once and play me the Good Samaritan. I shall go off my dot altogether if I don't get the helping hand."

Van Courtland fenced vaguely. "Alone in London," he said. "That's melodrama, isn't it?"

"Tragedy, man. It'll be on your conscience, I warn you."

"But Mrs. Lawrence—" blurted out van Courtland.

Lawrence stared. "What are you ragging me about now?" he said sulkily. "I'm unattached as ever and hope to remain so."

"I understood that you were going to marry Fleda Girard."

The elder man flushed. "Well, I never knew it," he countered resentfully. "She took the bit in her teeth some two years ago and I for one wouldn't have cared for the job of holding her."

"I hadn't heard."

"She left her father and established herself in a South Washington Square studio where she went in for modeling—big Art, you know, with water-crackers on the side. They say that old Tom Girard never missed her until she had been out of the house for a month." Lawrence laughed long and disagreeably.

"Excuse me one moment," said van Courtland, and he ran back into the auction room. "Is the report of this sale to be cabled over to the New York papers?" he asked. "Well, in that case will you be good enough to note that the bronze head, 'A Man in Pain,' was purchased by Mr. Philip Harrison van Courtland? Thank you very much."

Returning to the street, van Courtland found that Mr. Lawrence had been joined by still another compatriot—one Jimmy Edwards by name; by profession gourmand and respecter of persons.

"We were just about to toddle along," said Lawrence crossly. "Are you coming or not?"

"Sorry, but I am on my way to the steamer office. I want to book for Tuesday."

"Two bites at a cherry?" hazarded Lawrence with just the suspicion of a sneer.

"Perhaps so," returned van Courtland suavely.

## LA FABULEUSE USURE

Par J.-H. Rosny

**A**PRÈS mon service militaire, raconta Albert Vargèse, j'avais trouvé un emploi dans une maison d'ameublements. J'y végétais, au fond d'une cour, dans un bureau minuscule où j'écrivais des lettres et confectionnais des factures. Ma vie était d'autant plus misérable que la nature n'avait doté d'un coffre puissant garni de larges poumons qui exigeaient de l'air pur en abondance. J'étouffais; mes joues, naturellement colorées, prenaient la teinte des chicorées en cave; une rouille incrustait mes jointures; j'avais des vertiges et des palpitations. Seul, je me serais sauvé à l'autre bout du monde, mais il fallait nourrir la tante Elisabeth qui s'était privée des joies du mariage pour mener à bon terme mon enfance et mon adolescence. Mon séjour à l'armée avait définitivement tari ses minimes ressources. Des rhumatismes lui rongeaient les muscles, une sciatique lui vrillait périodiquement la cuisse gauche; par surcroît, elle avait un brave petit anévrisme qui menaçait de l'envoyer brusquement dans l'éternité. Il ne fallait donc pas songer à partir: le bureau fuligineux continuerait à aspirer ma santé goutte à goutte. Affreuses rôderies à travers la ville retentissante, rêves misérables et fiévreux projets: quelle gêhenne que le pays des pauvres, qu'elles sont formidables les chaînes de la misère! Certains soirs, il me semblait être tout au fond d'un puits, d'où aucune force ne pourrait m'extraire.

Un samedi d'automne, je circulais mollement à travers le quartier des Halles. Le temps était poisseux; une huile résineuse coulait avec la brume; les trottoirs sentaient la chair pourrie, la

vidange, la créosote et la dent cariée. Je trainais la semelle; je méditais sinistrement; j'avais à la fois un désir fou de bonheur et une soif ardente de mourir. Comme je traversais la rue d'Aboukir, un vieil homme fit un faux pas et s'étendit sur le sol, en poussant une plainte aiguë. Je courus d'instinct à son aide, je le relévai et lui offris le bras, car il boitillait.

— Ce n'est rien, répondit-il à mes questions, d'une voix plutôt sèche..... la machine est intact. J'ai seulement mal à la cheville.

Néanmoins, il prit mon bras et dit:

— Si vous n'avez rien de mieux à faire, conduisez-moi jusqu'à la rue des Bourdonnais.

— Ne voulez-vous pas prendre un fiacre? demandai-je.

— Jamais de la vie! glapit l'homme avec indignation.... Un fiacre! Pourquoi pas un train spécial?

Furtivement, je l'examinai. C'était une créature chétive, dont le squelette se dessinait avec force sous une peau flasque et des muscles négligeables. Des yeux ronds trouaient la face triangulaire, couleur croûte de brie; les lèvres dessinaient une cavité violâtre; tout l'être exprimait quelque chose de fatal, de précis et d'implacable. Je conduisis cet homme rue des Bourdonnais, je le transportai jusqu'au sixième étage, au bout d'un escalier en vortex et par un corridor long et très bas.

— Vous pouvez entrer, dit l'homme.

J'entrai dans une sale mansarde meublée d'un lit de fer étroit comme un cercueil, d'une table moisie, de deux chaises dépaillées depuis un demi-siècle et d'un fourneau grand comme une bouillotte.

— Oui, fit l'homme sardoniquement,

vous pouvez entrer... il n'y a pas un patard dans cette mansarde!

— Mon Dieu! dis-je, je ne voudrais pas vous déranger. Et à moins que vous n'ayez besoin de mes services, je vous tire ma révérence.

— Pas du tout! cria-t-il avec impatience. Il ne faut pas vous en aller encore. Vous avez été très gentil; je compte bien que vous allez compléter votre bonne action. J'ai besoin de quarante sous... j'en ai absolument besoin. Voulez-vous me les prêter?

Il parlait d'une voix aigre et stridente; une lueur marécageuse animait ses yeux circulaires. J'hésitai; j'avais tout juste deux francs cinquante sur moi, et ces deux francs cinquante représentaient les cinq derniers déjeuners du mois, car je déjeunais au bureau, faute de temps pour retourner jusqu'à Menilmontant où nous habitions, la tante Elisabeth et moi. Néanmoins, j'atteignis mon portemonnaie, j'en tirai les deux francs demandés par le vieil homme. Il prit la pièce, la retourna, la flaira et me regarda longuement, d'un air circonspect et goguenard:

— Je l'aurais parié, dit-il, vous êtes une poire... et quelle poire! Si j'en crois votre physionomie, ces deux francs sont pour vous quelque chose d'énorme.

— Vous avez deviné juste, ripostai-je, avec un peu de mauvaise humeur, cela représente quatre de mes cinq derniers déjeuners du mois.

— Je le disais bien! Et, par sucroït, vous me les *donnez*?

— Mais naturellement, fis-je, en haussant les épaules.

— Cependant je ne vous demande que de me les *prêter*.

Il eut un rire sardonique:

— Est-ce que vous n'auriez pas confiance en moi?

Il fit mine de se fâcher et grinça:

— J'ai presque envie de vous les rendre!

Il retourna encore la pièce, la renifla de nouveau et lui jeta un regard singulièrement tendre:

— Non, je ne vous la rendrai pas... Je vous l'emprunte, mais je payerai l'intérêt à un taux de pauvre, c'est-à-dire

cinq pour cent *par jour*, et à intérêts composés.

Je ne pus m'empêcher de sourire.

— Poire! reprit-il d'un ton de pitié. Poire fraîche, poire succulente!... A cinq pour cent, à intérêts composés, composés *jour par jour*... Votre adresse?

Je lui donnai mon adresse et sortis. Sa voix aigre m'accompagna jusqu'au bout du corridor:

— Une poire! une poire!... une poire exquise!

L'automne passa, puis l'hiver. Le printemps mêla ses petits nuages frais, sa jeune lumière, ses giboulées et ses averses. Je continuais à moisir dans mon petit bureau, je faisais toujours les mêmes rêves sinistres, et ma vie ne connaissait que la détresse et le désespoir. Un dimanche matin, je venais de finir, assis en face de la pauvre tante Elisabeth, un bol de café-chicorée et une tranche de pain acide. Le soleil poussait un rai dans notre caverne. Le ciel était plein de ces promesses étincelantes qui pincent le cœur des misérables. Je m'emplissais d'amertume, lorsqu'on frappa à la porte. J'allai ouvrir; je vis entrer l'homme vert qui promène à travers la ville ces petits morceaux de papier dont les uns ont remplacé les enchanteurs de la légende, et dont les autres fondent sur les destinées comme des bêtes fauves.

— Une lettre recommandée! fit cet homme en réclamant ma signature.

Il me laissa une enveloppe assez grosse que je regardais avec plus de méfiance que d'espérance. Je l'examinai une bonne minute; je ne la déchirai pas sans crainte. Il y avait une lettre et un gros papier vergé. Je lus d'abord la lettre. Elle disait:

“Vous m'avez prêté, il y a deux cent vingt-quatre jours, une somme de deux francs, le taux d'intérêt stipulé par moi étant de cinq pour cent par vingt-quatre heures. Votre crédit s'élève de ce chef à un total de cent onze mille francs que j'ai versés à votre compte au Crédit Foncier. Veuillez trouver ci-joint le récépissé du versement et m'en accuser réception. “Philippe AMERCOUR,

“17 ter, rue des Bourdonnais.”

Cela me sembla si fou que je n'en éprouvai d'abord aucune émotion. J'avais seulement l'impression d'une fumisterie, d'ailleurs inoffensive. Mais l'examen du papier joint à la lettre me prouva que je me trouvais véritablement crédité par une somme de cent onze mille francs dans le second établissement financier de France. Alors seulement, mon cœur se mit à battre; l'espérance et la crainte m'agitèrent tour à tour, jusqu'au tréfonds. A la fin, je n'y pus tenir; je me précipitai dans les escaliers, grimpai sur l'impériale d'un omnibus et tombai rue des Bourdonnais. Je retrouvai le chétif petit homme dans sa mansarde. Il m'accueillit avec un éclat de rire et s'écria:

— C'est ma poire!...

Et comme je me lançais dans une phrase confuse, il m'interrompit sèchement:

— J'ai fait ça pour me faire plaisir. C'est tout, et ça suffit!

Puis, il m'enveloppa d'un regard où il y avait une sorte de douceur et reprit:

— Je suis un vieux millionnaire, ma chère poire! Mon seul plaisir est de vivre très pauvrement. Je ne conçois

rien de plus charmant que de ne jamais manger à sa faim, de vivre dans un taudis, d'être vêtu sordidement, de coucher dans un lit dur... J'aime la pauvreté. C'est la reine des beaux rêves. Mais je ne suis pas avare; je fais de temps en temps l'aumône... une forte aumône, lorsque je rencontre quelque créature de votre sorte, naïve, généreuse et sans venin. Comme ces créatures sont rares, il est certain que je n'arrive pas même à dépenser le dixième de mon revenu. Là! Maintenant, vous savez tout. Donnez-moi une poignée de main et sauvez-vous: je déteste la reconnaissance!

Il me poussait doucement vers la porte. Au moment où je franchissais le seuil, son rire le reprit, il s'exclama:

— Ma bonne poire est un usurier!

Je retournai d'une traite à Ménilmontant. Quelque temps après, la tante Elisabeth soignait ses rhumatismes dans une confortable villa cauchoise, et je me lançais dans l'industrie automobile. La chance m'a favorisé; malgré mon tempérament poire, j'ai su m'assurer une fortune.



### THE IDEAL

**I** HEAR your husband has been very ill," remarked Mrs. Gramercy. "Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Park. "He was operated on for appendicitis. But I'm glad to say that all danger is now over. Of course we expected something of that kind to happen, occupying the station in life we do. I had it myself years ago—my family is older than my husband's, you know—and my two daughters have been operated upon. I've often thought it strange that you never had it."

"I don't know why you should think it strange, my dear," returned Mrs. Gramercy, haughtily tossing her head. "Our position in society is such that it isn't necessary for us to have appendicitis."

J. J. O'CONNELL.



**A** WIDOW and her insurance money are soon married.

## THE CLOSED ROOM

By Alma Martin Estabrook

**A**LITTLE old Locksmith, who was also a Genie, sat at his bench working diligently, when the door opened and a breathless woman entered.

"I am about to take possession of a new dwelling—a man's heart," she explained. "Those who have lived in it before have carried off the keys. But you will be able to fit me out, will you not?"

"What kind of a place is it?" asked the accommodating little Locksmith.

"A rather conventional house, large and sunny and commodious," she replied. "There are no mysterious passages about it, and no blind doors. The locks ought to be easily fitted, although some of them have grown rusty from disuse, and a few of the doors have never even been opened."

"It is sometimes so with a house," commented he.

The woman nodded. "But I could never be happy living in a part of any house," said she. "I must occupy it completely."

The Locksmith took down his great key-rings without answering.

"Now this," said he, holding out a key to her, "is the first you will need. It opens the outer door of the house into the vestibule of Interest."

"Oh," said she, with a little laugh, "that is already open. I shall not need that key."

He gave her another to the wide central hall of Confidence, and she took it, glad to get it, of course, but without great enthusiasm, and hung it on her girdle.

"And this is the key to the living-room of Comradeship," he went on.

"That, I suppose, is a large west-facing apartment, with plenty of windows and a good fireplace. It is usually the most cheerful and the most comfortable room in a house."

"Perhaps," said the woman. "I shall sit there a great deal, I am sure," and she slipped the key carefully in place.

The Locksmith selected another from one of the rings.

"This fits the lock on the door of the room of Constancy," said he.

"I'm afraid that room has been rather neglected," she said, with a charming little grimace, "but I shall look after it at once."

The Locksmith's eyelid flickered at the way the red bow of her lips straightened into a thin line.

Then he gave her other keys, little and big, naming them as he gave them, and she hung them one by one upon her girdle.

"But," said she, when he would have put the key-rings away at last, "you have given me none for the unused rooms of which I told you."

He hesitated, fingering the keys on a small ring which he had not yet touched. "You are certain you wish them?" he asked.

"Above all the others!"

"Oh, very well," said he, and dropped into her palm two slender keys of beaten gold.

"Now," said she triumphantly, with a sigh of relief, "I shall go where I please!"

And she went away, her girdle weighted with the keys as the stomacher of Cleopatra with its jewels.

Days after she came back, so radiant

that her beauty made the eyes of the little old Locksmith blink as they always did when the sun, catching them wide-open, would flash his audacious smile straight into them.

"Well?" interrogated he of her.

"They fit!" she cried. "Every key turns its lock like magic! It is quite wonderful, is it not?"

"By no means," he replied. "You are a very clever woman and I am a Locksmith and Genie. Between us we should be able to accomplish most things."

The woman's answering smile was vague. "There is—something else," said she. "I need still another key."

"Bless me! What key is that?"

A shade of annoyance lay over her lifted eyes like the dapple of shadow over a pool.

"There is a little closed room in the rear of the house that I did not notice just at first," said she. "It is a dark, inner room, but I must get in."

"Do you need it?" asked he. "Are there not enough rooms without it?"

"It is not that I need it," she answered, "but that it mocks me with its closed door. I have looked in at the keyhole and can see nothing but dust and shadows and cobwebs. But I am sure there is something else there."

"The Room of the Past," murmured he.

"Yes," she nodded, "and I must turn the lock."

"Why?" he asked. "Why must you?"

She flushed, and her eyes fell. Then she lifted them defiantly.

"It is *my* house, is it not? Besides, it needs air and light."

The wise little Locksmith smiled curiously; and the woman's color deepened beneath the smile.

"It is not curiosity that urges me," she flamed, as if he had accused her. "The whole house has need of my care."

He shook his head.

"Leave the room closed," said he.

But she held out her hand peremptorily.

"Give me a key for it," she commanded.

"There is none in the shop that will fit that lock."

"Make one, then."

"I could not if I would."

"What shall I do?" she cried.

"The man has a key. Ask him for it, if you must."

She smiled at him in quivering disdain.

"Surely there must be a duplicate somewhere," she urged.

"There is none," said he.

She stared at him in amazement.

"You mean that you cannot help me to get in there?" she demanded.

The Locksmith made her his profoundest curtsey.

"Madam," said he, "there are things which even you and I cannot do with all our cleverness and skill."



**S**PENDTHRIFT—One who has a different way from us in getting rid of his money.



**M**RS. WAGGER—I can't understand why the baby is so backward in learning to talk.

**Miss Caustic**—And it is with you constantly, too.

## A SIDE TRAIL OUT

By May C. Ringwalt

"**D**ANVERS has finished his; now it's up to you, Trescott." Billy encouragingly jingled the coin in his fat, indolent hand.

Outside, as far as the eye could reach, stretched a limitless sweep of scorching sand; within the car, alkali dust sifted thick through the cracks of closed windows and ventilators tickled the throat to perpetual thirst. In the smoking-compartment of an overland train three men, collarless and in their shirt sleeves, were matching stories for drinks and pastime.

"You globe-trotters have an unfair advantage over me," Trescott protested in his low, cultured voice. "A bank clerk has had more experience in figures than thrills. I never had a real adventure in my life." He paused, lighting a fresh cigar. "The other night in San Francisco, though, I did have a most remarkable confidence."

"Come, out with it, old man!" cried Danvers.

Trescott blew slow, hesitating puffs of smoke into the hot air. "I suppose there would be no harm in telling it here. Should either of you meet Bruce Norton at any future time it would be under his assumed name. Jove, he was so much changed—with his Van Dyke beard and bearing of distinction—I would never have recognized him in the world! But then I was not standing on a San Francisco street corner waiting to speak to a man who had died and been cremated ten years ago."

"Had he crossed the Mojave desert in August?" asked Billy in a stage whisper.

"He had come to one of those burning wastes in life that most of us have to go straight across," replied Trescott oracularly, "but Norton took a side trail out.

"I'll begin at the beginning," he continued, after leaning over to Danvers's pipe to relight his cigar. "Bruce Norton came to Yale from a little mid-Western town—the kind you never look for on a map; only see out of a car window. But any scrap of earth is big enough to grow a fool. This little town raised two. Norton was engaged to the other one before he left for college. She was the silly, pink-and-white doll-baby type—pretty no end. I know, for at first Norton's half of the room had a dado of her pictures. Even in his senior year he loyally kept one photograph framed on his bureau. He must have winced every time he looked at it, for mere prettiness can only satisfy a boy—and Norton had become a man. The bubble of his dreams went all to pieces the last Summer he was home. Not that he admitted it even to me. He wasn't the talking kind—would never have told me what he did the other night if he hadn't been so pressed to the wall."

Trescott paused again, an affectionate light stealing into his eyes. "Norton was the most tender-hearted fellow that you ever saw. Couldn't even bear to dissect a frog in the Lab. and all that sort of thing, and the thought of wounding this clinging-vine little girl became a positive nightmare. But he knew that to a man of his temperament marriage without love would mean a life of misery for them both, so after he had passed his final examina-

tions he cut the graduating exercises and went to her to have it out."

"And found that she had skipped with some nice country bumpkin?" suggested Danvers, the cynic.

Trescott shook his head. "Norton never reached his destination. The second night there was a wreck—one of the worst on record. A head-on collision, the telescoped cars instantly catching fire. Many of the bodies were burned beyond recognition. Some were never found."

"Cheerful little story for an overland trip," affably murmured Billy. "But go on, old boy."

"Norton was pinned helpless under a heavy beam—to wait for the flames that were racing toward him. But after the first shock of physical horror, his one thought until he was suffocated by the smoke was that now the little girl out West need never know that he had ceased to love her. And after his miraculous rescue, when in the emergency hospital he drifted back to consciousness, it was almost with resentment that he took up life again.

"Any idea who the fellow is, doc? Can't we send for his folks, somehow?" were the whispered words that floated over Norton's bed like a voice in a dream.

"Nothing left on him by way of identification," answered the doctor. "His very clothes were torn from his back. The conductor's fatally injured; the porter killed, you know. We'll have to wait and get all our information from the man himself—if he comes to."

"It was the cue to his future play, and Norton snatched at it eagerly. He was alone in the world, no one dependent on him. Fate had washed the slate clean. He would begin all over again, in a new place, under a new name."

"And leave the little girl in the West in ignorance to have the jimmies over his awful end all the rest of her days!" indignantly muttered Danvers. "Glad you casually mentioned that he was tender-hearted!"

"Perhaps," said Trescott, "the way

I've blurted it out does put Norton in a bad light, but from what I know of him in the past—from what he told me the other night—I'm convinced that he formed his determination more out of consideration for the girl than to save himself."

Trescott tugged heavily at his cigar. "The details were easy. The railroad company gave him transportation to San Francisco, and a couple of hundred or so damages. He was young, talented, unafraid. And luck stayed with him. He soon found an opening in a commercial house, steadily worked his way up, won recognition—and incidentally a neat little income. At first he lived a recluse, but he was always a likable fellow and made friends in spite of himself. He went out more and more into society—then the inevitable happened."

"Found his true affinity and that sort of thing?" queried Billy.

Trescott nodded. "Love at first sight. Jove, you couldn't blame Norton—I sat next to her at one little dinner! No slip of a girl this time, but a woman of thirty at the full flush of beauty and charm. Norton told me something of her history. In her first youth she had had a great sorrow, a love affair that had turned out unfortunately. The unanswerable riddle of woman! The trial that would have been a man's undoing made, developed, lifted her above the commonplace. Besides, unexpected opportunities came to her. She was one of a large family and her individuality had been crowded out. But a rich uncle died and his widow frantically adopted her. Took her to Europe, where she spent five years in study and travel—absorbing all that was best in an atmosphere of culture and art. It was at Paris that Norton's California friends met her and won her promise of a long visit on her return to America."

"And how about the goddess herself?" again questioned Billy. "Did she look upon Norton with smiling or indifferent eyes?"

"Had he been a man free from a

past he had every hope that he could win out."

"Norton's an ass!" ejaculated Danvers. "He cut loose from his past ten years ago. Why not let bygones be bygones now?"

"Because," smiled Trescott, "although you will probably doubt it, Norton has a high sense of honor. Besides, my dear fellow, it's all well enough to keep the family skeleton in hiding from acquaintances invited in for afternoon tea, but since the days of Bluebeard a locked closet between a husband and wife—"

"Then let him make a clean breast

of it," interrupted Danvers. "A woman will forgive the man she loves everything—that he has done to another girl."

"Precisely," retorted Trescott. "There's where the deuce comes in. It isn't another girl."

"What do you mean?" gasped Danvers and Billy breathlessly.

Trescott flicked the ashes from his burnt-out cigar. "I mean," he concluded, "that the little girl of the mid-West that Norton jilted ten years ago and the woman in San Francisco that he worships today are one and the same."



### ANCIENT

"PAPA, what is a gentleman of the old school?"

"The man with a bicycle, my son."



### THE IRONY OF FATE

**H**E—So Smythe has been run over by an automobile, eh! How did it happen?

**SHE**—The poor fellow was stooping over to pick up a horseshoe for luck.



### AGREED WITH HIM

"**N**OW that you are recovering from the operation," said the fashionable doctor to the patient whose appendix had been removed, "I would suggest a change in your mode of life. A man of your age who has retired on his money is apt to fall into indolent habits. If you wish to thoroughly recover your health I would advise you to have some definite object in life so as to keep your mind from dwelling on your ailments. It wouldn't be a bad idea if you went back to your old occupation."

"I quite agree with you, doctor," replied the patient. "You've diagnosed my case to a nicety. I made up my mind, after that bill you sent me, that the best thing I could do was to get back to work again."

## AFTER READING KEATS

By Charles Hanson Towne

DOWN his great corridors of sumptuous sound  
Today I wandered once again; each word  
Seemed like the lyric rapture of a bird  
Singing in Spring above the burgeoning ground.  
Oh, once again that old delight I found,  
Once more the marvel of his voice I heard  
Until my spirit with new joy was stirred,  
Hearing such music through his halls resound.

How beautiful thy palace, Poet blest!—  
That room wherein is set thy Grecian Urn,  
Thy Nightingale that sings at set of sun  
Out in thy garden where my tired feet turn;  
And in one chamber, back from his long quest,  
That passionate lover, young Endymion!



## A MUTUAL SURPRISE

"WELL, now, the surprise-party at Tut Springer's, night before last," began Mr. Jig Pollard, a prominent citizen of the Arkansas neighborhood of Gobbler Scratch, who had casually percolated into the office of the Polkville *Weekly Clarion*, "was—"

"Was it really a surprise?" a bit skeptically asked the able editor.

"Eh—yah! All things considered, I reckon it was," was the reply. "When the surprisers invaded the place, with glad cries and a jug or two of dainty refreshments, and one thing and another, and found the lady of the house holding the gentleman of the house down on his back on the floor by means of his throat and a-beating of him on the brow with a big chinny mug with a picture of a little lamb on it and the remark, 'Love the Giver' and at the same time so loudly explaining how wrong he was that she couldn't hear him feebly agreeing with her—the discussion arising, I'm told, over some trifling difference about a passage of Scripture, one of the contradicting parties being a Shouting Methodist in good standing and the other a chronic Campbellite—while the children sat around on the bed in their innocent little nightgowns and bet grains of popcorn on who'd get the best of the experiment; and when the horse-de-combatants, as they generally call 'em in stories, discovered that they had been discovered by the surprise-party, quite naturally they were surprised at being surprised at such a time, and of course the members of the surprise-party were equally surprised at surprising them under such surprising circumstances. So, looking at it up one side and down the other, I reckon I can safely say that the surprise was a surprise in the full sense of the word, and all parties to the surprise-party at Lab Juckett's were duly and properly surprised."

TOM P. MORGAN.